

**CHU T'IEN-WEN:  
WRITING "DECADENT" FICTION  
IN CONTEMPORARY TAIWAN**

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## Abstract

In recent years, literature in Taiwan has developed dynamically in a context of rapid social change and intense debate in intellectual circles over ideology. Chu T'ien-wen (1956- ) is the eldest daughter of the most notable literary family in Taiwan; the principal founder of the "Three-Three" literary coterie in the late 1970s and the most successful screenwriter of the Taiwanese New Cinema in the 1980s. However, as yet no book-length study has been devoted to the works of this important figure in the contemporary Taiwan literary scene.

The present thesis is a study of Chu T'ien-wen's work up to 1996, with chapters arranged broadly in chronological order. It traces the formation of her early sinocentric, utopian political and social beliefs, and their modification in the light of her increasing contact with Taiwan-centred Nativist ideas. This study endeavours to address the many facets of Chu's writing identity (Chinese tradition - Taiwan identity - Feminism - Creative writing), and examine how her works reflect her maturing understanding under the influence of changes in society.

Forced to re-evaluate her ideas by the clash between her vision of Confucian Chinese ideals and the development of Taiwan-centred Nativism, Chu broke through to her unique style in *Splendour of the End of the Century*, a collection of stories which won immediate critical acclaim both for its unconventional subject matter and its unorthodox style. Since then Chu, in writing about the moral and spiritual decadence of modern urban life in *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, has maintained her basic belief in the role of the *shih*, but, at the same time, she has yielded to the inevitability of destruction of

traditional values. Nonetheless, her writing on previously unmentionable subjects has broadened the parameters of what is acceptable in literature. This study will demonstrate that in writing her "decadent" fiction, and through her depiction of sensual refinement, Chu showed that social changes in Taiwan had forced her to accept the fact that Confucian thought has irretrievably lost its primacy in intellectual life, and that her original utopian vision is no longer attainable. As she accepts democracy more, she has had to leave behind her early ideal, be more pragmatic, and become a "decadent" writer philosophically.



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Finally, I thank my family and my husband for their endless support and forbearance.

## Notes on Transcription and Abbreviations

The Wade-Giles transliteration system for Chinese words is used here except in the case of names of authors who publish in English and have their own preferred spelling. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. The following abbreviations are used in the Footnotes and Bibliography.

<i>CTSHC</i>	<i>Ch'iao t'ai-shou hsin-chi</i> (The Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao)
<i>CS</i>	<i>Ch'uan-shuo</i> (Legend)
<i>HJSC</i>	<i>Huang-jen shou-chi</i> (The Notebook of a Desolate Man)
<i>HMJS</i>	<i>Hsi-meng jen-sheng</i> (The Puppet Master)
<i>HNHN</i>	<i>Hao-nan hao-nü</i> (Good Men, Good Women)
<i>HPTKS</i>	<i>Hsiao-Pi te ku-shih</i> ( The Story of Hsiao-Pi)
<i>HYCS</i>	<i>Hua-yi ch'ien-shen</i> (A Flower Remembers Her Previous Lives)
<i>LLFC</i>	<i>Lien-lien feng-ch'en</i> (Dust in the Wind)
<i>PCCS</i>	<i>Pei-ch'ing ch'eng-shih</i> (City of Sadness)
<i>SCMTHL</i>	<i>Shih-chi-mo te hua-li</i> (Splendour of the End of the Century)
<i>SCM</i>	<i>San chieh-mei</i> (Three Sisters)
<i>TC</i>	<i>Tamkang chi</i> (Notes on Tamkang)
<i>TYHSC</i>	<i>Chu T'ien-wen tien-ying hsiao-shuo chi</i> (The Film Stories of Chu T'ien-wen)
<i>THNTCC</i>	<i>Tsui hsiang-nien te chi-chieh</i> (The Most Memorable Season)
<i>YHCT</i>	<i>Yen-hsia chih-tu</i> (The City of Summer Heat)

## Introduction

### I. Why Write About Chu T'ien-wen?

The reason why I have chosen Chu T'ien-wen, a living author who is still actively writing, to be the subject of this thesis (at the risk of being rendered out-of-date by her next work) is not only because of her outstanding literary achievements, but, more importantly, because a study of the unfolding of her maturity could reveal a great deal about the tremendous socio-cultural development in Taiwan society during the last twenty years.

Chu's cultural background, and the beliefs instilled in her during her formative years infused her early writing with the "spiritual aristocratic" mentality typical of the privileged mainlander of those times. Indeed, for quite a few years, she was one of the standard bearers of traditional ideology among the younger generation of Taiwanese writers. However, her encounter with the Taiwan Nativist movement and indigenous Taiwanese culture led to a serious and painful re-orientation in her writing. Being a person of firm convictions, she has never totally forsaken her ideas on social order, but the impact of Taiwan's cultural development and the irresistible advance of democratisation have put her in a moral predicament, which I shall argue, is the direct cause of her overtly sensual language, a compulsive obsession with social decay, and the explicit eroticism of her recent fiction.

I regard Chu's recent novel as that of a thoroughly "decadent" writer, and will try to clarify in the limited space of this thesis, the highly entangled ramifications of the various usages of the term. I also hope that this clarification will shed light on the special features of Taiwan literature today. For it is, I

believe, the interactions of its political, cultural and aesthetic elements that has endowed Chu T'ien-wen's fiction with, not only a remarkable originality, but also a dramatic tension between social responsibility and self-indulgence in a life of pleasure.

The mere raising of the relevant questions, will, I hope, justify my efforts, even if my answers to these questions do not convince every observer of Taiwan's literature. Any effort at this time to produce a final assessment of Chu's writing is bound to be inconclusive, as would be any attempt to predict the final outcome of the drastic changes taking place in every aspect of Taiwan's culture, the totality of which, Chinese and Taiwanese, provides the motive force for her maturing. Here lie, paradoxically, both the temptation of Chu's writing, and the challenge to write on Chu.

## II. A Diverse Career

Since her first publication in 1977, Chu T'ien-wen has become one of the most acclaimed contemporary women writers in Taiwan, and developed into an elegant stylist in Chinese. She has also achieved eminence as a screenwriter -- the only Taiwanese "female fiction writer to have been successful in this field."<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 80s and 90s, the stylistic innovation of the films in which she co-operated with director Hou Hsiao-hsien led the "New Cinema" (*hsin tien-ying*) movement (1982-1986) in Taiwan. Her work is likely to continue to be significant

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<sup>1</sup>. This is suggested by Li T'ien-to and Ch'en Pei-chih in their essay "Pa-shih nien-tai Taiwan (*hsin*) *tien-ying* te she-hui hsüeh t'an-so" (The Search for the Sociology of the Taiwanese (New) Cinema in the 1980s), in *Tang-tai hua-yü tien-ying lun-shu* (The Discourse of the Contemporary Chinese Film), ed. Li T'ien-to (Taipei: Shih-pao ch'u-pan-she, 1996), p. 49.

in the future development of Chinese cinema. In 1990 she published *Splendour of the End of the Century* (Shih-chi-mo te hua-li), followed in 1994 by *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* (Huang-jen shou-chi), the two books that finally established her as a major writer.

Her cultural and philosophical views have always informed her writing; and, as she has matured, the themes she has addressed have become more complex, and the problems broader and more related to the human condition. Her writing reveals not only close ties with those who influenced her in Chinese literature, but that she is also in the forefront of contemporary cultural thought in Taiwan. As such, her work is receiving increasing attention from literary critics in Taiwan and overseas.

Although there have been quite a number of critical essays, mainly in Chinese, on Chu T'ien-wen's individual works of fiction and on the films for which she wrote the scripts, her entire output to date has not yet been the subject of a book-length study. The reason is perhaps the diversity of her work in terms of writing style and the complexity of content, as well as the range of socio-cultural themes and media used. In this study, I shall analyse all her important written works, and offer an interpretation of her development so far. Obviously, at this stage in a career that has shown such fruitful progress, my interpretation can, as I have said, be only provisional. However, I hope that this study will at least testify to the extent of Chu T'ien-wen's achievement so far, and of her potential for further development.

Her first two volumes of short stories, *The Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao* (Ch'iao-t'ai-shou hsin-chi, 1977) and *Legend* (Ch'uan-shuo, 1982) had been written largely under the spell of traditional Chinese philosophy and morality. But her time working in film (1982-1986) brought substantial modification to her earlier views due to her contact with a broader range of

people holding Nativist political and philosophical ideas. Her collection of short stories *Splendour of the End of the Century*, not only first demonstrated her capability for mastery of the language, but also provided a vivid portrayal of the breakdown of contemporary Taiwan society. In addition, it provoked much discussion on questions of sex and gender, of feminism and male chauvinism, and most notably, of decadent trends developing in society.

The introduction of all these themes marked a radical change in Chu's thematic vocabulary. Her next work, a novel, *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* (*Huang-jen shou-chi*, 1994) continued this change in a treatment of homosexual love and sensuality. The unique feature of this novel is that it uses the predicament of individual choice between morality and eroticism to highlight the cultural conflict within current Taiwan society.

The nativist views expressed in her film stories, and the controversy stirred up by *Splendour of the End of the Century* and, even more so, by *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* have tended to obscure an underlying continuity in Chu's work -- her search for a reconciliation between a society regulated by the code of the traditional *shih* and the reality of Taiwan's rapid changing socio-cultural scene.

### III. The Definition of *Shih*

Apart from the extensive literary discussion of the influence of Chang Ailing's works on Chu T'ien-wen, as we shall see in the next section, there were two strong literary influences on Chu T'ien-wen in her formative years: one was her father, Chu Hsi-ning, and the other was Hu Lan-ch'eng, a writer and journalist who was active in the 1940s. In addition, Liu Mu-sha, her mother and her Hakka



family were the source of experience of local life which would be valuable when her career developed into screenwriting.

Huang Chin-shu argues that Chu was inspired by Hu Lan-ch'eng throughout her writing career and that Chu's latest highly stylised language clearly shows Hu's influence.<sup>2</sup> It was only in 1996, two years after the publication of the novel, *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* that she broke silence, writing the memoir about her literary affiliation to Hu Lan-ch'eng and Chang Ai-ling which throws some light on Huang's view, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter V.

A reading of her memoir, however, helps us to understand that a degree of stylistic resemblance between these three writers does not imply that they all share the same ideological beliefs or socio-cultural outlook. Chang Ai-ling was never interested or active in aesthetic movements, while Hu's speciality was political journalism rather than fiction writing. Their influences on Chu T'ien-wen were important, yet Chu has established her individuality as an author on her own terms.

All these writers, active in the 1940s and 1950s, gave Chu T'ien-wen a connection with the intellectual history of the first half of the twentieth century in China. Other Taiwanese writers today suffer a literary deficit as the result of the KMT censorship of modern mainland Chinese literature. She deemed herself fortunate to be a follower of both Chang and Hu, a combination of influences, which may be characterised as feminine/emotional and masculine/rational respectively which came together as a unique amalgam in her own works.

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2. Huang Chin-shu, "Shen-chi chih-wu: hou si-shih-si hui? (hou) Hsian-tai ch'i-shih-lu?" (The Temple Dancer: The Final Forty-Four Chapters? A (Post) Modern Exposition), in Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, pp. 298-299.

The literary influences of her formative years led Chu to envisage an ideal path through life for herself and develop her belief that being the modern successor to the classical *shih* would be a way for her to make her contribution to society. The slogan of the Three-Three Society "to wake up three thousand *shih*" in fact echoed the May Fourth educational concept "Save the Nation" (*chiu-kuo*), but, as yet no critical studies have asked questions such as: Why was the membership of the Three-Three Society confined to would-be *shih*? Why did they not aim to wake up three thousand of the common people? How does the concept of the ideal *shih* affect the different phases of Chu's writing? Why, after all, did Chu manifest openly this kind of elitism?

Since it was basic to Chu's early thinking and informs her outlook even now, an explanation of the concept of the *shih* is crucial to understanding Chu's work. In what follows, I shall outline its connotation in traditional Chinese culture, and why it is still considered to have a certain validity in Taiwan, but not in mainland China.

According to the Confucian social model, the subjects of the ruler can be divided into two main strata, the *shih* and the *min*, which can be freely translated as the gentlemen and the common people. The duty of the *shih* is to provide advice to the ruler and guidance to society in general. Later Confucianists further divided *min* into three sub-strata, viz. the peasants (*nung*), workers (*kung*) and merchants (*shang*). The special feature of the *shih* in traditional Chinese thought is that they not only exercise temporal power on behalf of the ruler but are also seen as having a moral responsibility for maintaining ethical standards and codes to govern individual behaviour so as to ensure the harmony of the state.

After the fall of the Ch'ing dynasty, and more especially after the May Fourth Enlightenment Movement, the term intellectual (*chih-shih fen-tzu*) has

become generally used in China, and should be strictly differentiated from the concept of *shih*, more especially because Chu T'ien-wen would never have used the term intellectual. The reason is that the social role of the intellectual in Communist China differs drastically from that of the *shih* in traditional China. As befits a Marxist analysis, the intellectual stratum is considered to have no moral superiority over others, nor any ethical responsibility for the state. After the Yen-an Forum on Art and Literature in 1942, Mao repeatedly emphasised that the intellectual should be the "pupil of the masses," and support Party policies without questioning the guidance of the Party to the nation. In this model, it is the masses who, guided by the Party, provide the driving force for revolution. All the members of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois classes, including intellectuals, are required to remould themselves as the targets of the revolution.<sup>3</sup>

On Taiwan after 1949, on the other hand, under the control of the KMT, the more traditional Confucian concept survived relatively intact (in theory, if not in practice) into the recent period of democratisation.

Chu T'ien-wen's education was strongly biased towards Confucianism, which, because of its emphasis on learning and training in a set of classic texts, can be considered a form of meritocracy. Before the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-907), the *shih* were basically chosen from the aristocratic clans of illustrious lineage. The advent of the T'ang saw the replacement of this system with selection by examination. During the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) the candidates for the examination came from a wide range of family backgrounds. The selection was controlled by the *shih* establishment and took the form of the

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<sup>3</sup>. But relations between the Party and the intellectuals have proved difficult, because the intellectuals have shown a strong tendency to express their own opinions on policy matters, instead of getting on with their assigned role of helping with the implementation of policies already laid down by the Party.

production of a text, written according to a very specific set of rules. The rules became stricter in the Ming Dynasty in which the "eight-legged-essay" (pa-ku-wen) was used. Such rules were quite formulaic, and success required a very detailed knowledge of the classics. The topics of the Imperial examination in the Ming and Ch'ing period were all from the *Four Books* (*the Great Learning, the Doctrine of the Mean, the Analects, and the Book of Mencius*), and its content needed to be based on *Collected Notes on the Four Books* (*Si-shu chi-chu*) by Chu Hsi. The examinee was not supposed to write about his personal opinions.<sup>4</sup>

In *This Culture of Ours: Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China*, Peter K. Bol argues that Chinese culture and politics have been controlled by this small elite group of *shih*, and that the group is a self-recruiting, systemic cultural element of Chinese society: "*Shih* learning was an historical entity, constituted by men who read many of the same texts, shared many assumptions about the value of what they were doing, and established identities with reference to each other. It was their intellectual culture."<sup>5</sup>

Bol stresses the importance of learning and writing in qualifying as a worthy *shih*. Clearly, his description of *shih* as members of a high social status stratum, who need to be capable of intellectual analysis and proficient in logical debate based on classical texts, is quite in agreement with Confucius' suggestion, in the *Analects*, that "the common people may be made to follow a path of action,

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<sup>4</sup>. "Ke-chü chih-tu" (Imperial examination system), in *Chung-kuo wen-hua ts'u-tien* (Dictionary of Chinese Culture), ed. Shih Hsüan-yüan and others (Shanghai: Shanghai she-hui k'e-hsüeh yüan ch'u-pan-she, 1987), p. 422.

<sup>5</sup>. Peter K. Bol, *This Culture of Ours: Intellectuals Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 5.

but they cannot be made to understand it."<sup>6</sup> On this view, the *shih* are both the originators and the guardians of social and ethical codes.<sup>7</sup>

Such a formulation makes clear the obvious difference between the social role of the *shih* and that of the common people: "The superior man thinks of virtue; the common people think of comfort; the superior man thinks of the sanctions of law; the common people think of favours which they may receive."<sup>8</sup> According to Confucian doctrine these men of virtue had a duty to assert their intellectual authority: The *shih* are envisaged as preserving moral standards, though ultimate political power lay with the ruler. Thus, in the light of this traditional concept, the mandate for the *shih* is to be the repository of knowledge, and to sustain ethical, social and moral values through their knowledge of the classics, thus sustaining the basic structure of Chinese society.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Lun Yü*, 8/9. For English translation, see James Legge, "Confucian Analects," (8.9) in *The Four Books*. p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> For an interesting discussion on how the *shih* controlled the "difficult text," see Henry Y. H. Zhao, *Pi-yao te ku-tu* (Loneliness by Necessity) (Hong Kong: T'ien-ti chu-pan-she, 1995), p. 202.

<sup>8</sup> *Lun Yü*, 4/11. For English translation, see James Legge, "Confucian Analects," (4.11) in *The Four Books*. p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> Chang Mao-kui, "Chih-shih fen-tzu yü she-hui yün-tung" (The Intellectual and Social Movement) in *Pien ch'ien chung Taiwan she-hui te chung-ch'an chieh-chi* (The Middle Class of Taiwan Society in Transition), ed. Hsiao Hsin-huang (Taipei: Chü-liu tu-shu kung-ssu, 1993), p. 201. Chang points out the function of the Western style modern intellectual is to be a "disturber of established order." What Chang did not show is that this is one of the main differences between the modern Chinese western style *intellectual*, and the Chinese traditional *shih*.

Since there is no single, commonly accepted English equivalent which conveys the role of the *shih* in traditional Chinese culture, bearing the preceding discussion in mind, I will use the word in its Chinese original.<sup>10</sup>

#### IV. The Question of Decadence

As befits a concept that has been in use in the closed social system that was China for thousands of years, there is little if any controversy about the meaning of the concept of *shih* -- certainly not as far as Chu T'ien-wen is concerned.

However, the concept of decadence does not command the same unanimity of understanding. It has been applied variously to a trend of the European *fin-de siècle*, to a trend witnessed in Chinese traditional culture in certain periods, for example, the Wei-Chin or the Late Ming, and to a tendency in modern Chinese literature of the 1930s and 1940s. Chu's work has some apparent similarity, in differing ways, to each of these three, as I shall describe in detail. However, I would like to make it clear at the outset that these similarities should not be allowed to detract from the unique quality of Chu's vision of society and its ills. In this thesis, I shall try to show that the stimulus to Chu's search for aesthetic achievement lay not only in the danger she saw to the social function of the *shih*, but also in the corruption of their traditional ideals in the decadence permeating the metropolis of Taipei today.

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<sup>10</sup>. See Richard B. Mather "Individualist Expressions of the Outsiders during the Six Dynasties," in *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values*, ed. Donald J. Munro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1985), p. 210. Mather translates *Shih* or *Shih ta-fu* as Gentlemen/officials.

The following brief discussion of decadence will provide a context for the evaluation of other critics' comments on Chu's work.

The word and its French counterpart *Décadence* derive from the Latin *cadere*, to fall. In Western literature, the concept has been most famously used in connection with the fall of the Roman Empire almost two thousand years ago, to refer to the cultural decline that followed a time of great achievement. It was typified by world weariness, self-absorption and the search for fresh stimulation through artistic over-refinement and degenerate behaviour. The term has been used in modern times especially in connection with European *fîn-de-siècle* art and literature, and life style of the late nineteenth century exemplified by Symbolism, the Aesthetic Movement, and Art Nouveau. It has been applied to such artists and writers as Arthur Rimbaud (1854-91), Oscar Wilde (1852-1900) and Aubrey Beardsley (1872-98). Jennifer Birkett summarises the psychological stance of Decadence as expressed in modern literature as follows: "simultaneously defiant and submissive, invoking energies which are immediately frozen, framed and trapped, surrendered to become images of ruin and waste."<sup>11</sup>

In arguing that there has been decadence in modern Chinese literature, Leo Ou-fan Lee defines it as an "aesthetic style" originating "in the urban cultural context," and points out that it was "one of the characteristic features of Shanghai modernist literature." Lee considers that it is "the urban sensation" that caused the writers of the 1930s and 40s to draw upon the theme of exotic life

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<sup>11</sup>. Jennifer Birkett, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1986), p. 5

style. He regards decadence as "a reaction against materialism, and an escape from a cruel and empty mechanical life."<sup>12</sup>

Some modern Chinese literature of the 1930s and 40s was very much inspired by the aestheticism of the European Decadent movement. Leo Ou-fan Lee's pioneering critical study argues that such Chinese writers, all living in Shanghai, include the "Aestheticist School" (wei-mei p'ai) and the "New Sensualist School" (hsin-kan-chüeh p'ai)<sup>13</sup> and other writers, especially Chang Ai-ling. Lee ends his study with a discussion of Chu T'ien-wen, placing her essentially in the same overall category as these groups of writers. Thus, in discussing the title story in *Splendour of the End of the Century*, which describes a fashion model's life in a materialistic urban environment, Lee does not place Chu as a specifically Taiwanese writer, but rather considers her in the overall context of modern Chinese decadent writing.<sup>14</sup> He links her to Chang Ai-

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<sup>12</sup>. Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Decadence: A Tentative Essay on the Relevance of a Concept in Modern Chinese Literature" in *Chinese Literature and European Context: Proceedings of the 2nd International Sinological Symposium, Smolenice Castle, June 22-25, 1993*, ed. Marián Gálik (Bratislava: Institute of Asian and African Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1994), p. 21.

<sup>13</sup>. As discussed in detail in the Conclusion, writers of the Aesthetic School including Shao Hsün-mei, T'eng Ku, Chang K'e-piao, Hsü Chih-mo, Chu Hsiang and Hsü Hsü, took the stance of "art for art's sake." The New Sensualist School including Shih Che-ts'un, Liu Na-ou and Mu Shih-ying wrote about the materialistic life of the new urban environment.

<sup>14</sup>. Lee points out that "Most intellectuals in the People's Republic do not wish to ruminate on the end of the century, a Chinese *fin-de-siècle*; rather they seem more ready to embrace the coming of the 21st century. It is only in places like Hong Kong (where the countdown to 1997 has already begun) and Taiwan that the phrase shih-chi-mo has entered the intellectual discourse and. . . has become the title of a marvellous work by Chu T'ien-wen." See Lee's "Decadence: A Tentative Essay on the Relevance of a Concept in Modern Chinese Literature," 1994, p. 20.



ling's portrayal of modern urban society, as if Chu's writing is an updated version of Chang Ai-ling:

The author must be familiar with Chang Ai-ling's work, otherwise, how could she produce such similarly, wonderful imaginative work? At the end of *Splendour of the End of the Century*, we see another of Chang's characters, Pai Liu-su<sup>15</sup> -- the postmodern Mi-ya, who lives in a world of fashion, fighting to delay time.<sup>16</sup>

David Der-wei Wang takes a similar view to Lee, but places Chu in a more specifically Taiwanese context. He concludes that Chu's portrayal of Taipei in the 1990s shares many of the features of Western "*fin-de-siècle* philosophy": "Amid a sense of eschatological melancholy and the urge to *carpe diem*, out of unfathomable despair and unquenchable desire, Taipei abandons herself to a *fin-de-siècle* syndrome. But perhaps even this *fin-de-siècle* self-abandon may already be stale repetition: a posture borrowed from the West, from the last century."<sup>17</sup>

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15. Pai Liu-su is the female protagonist in Chang Ai-ling's story "Ch'ing-ch'eng chih-lien" (Love in a Fallen City).

16. Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Chung-kuo hsien-tai wen-hsüeh te t'ui-fei chi tso-chia" (Decadence in Chinese Modern Literature and Writers), *Tang-tai*, no. 93 (Jan. 1994): 46.

17. David Der-wei Wang, "Fin-de-siècle Splendour: Contemporary Women Writers' Vision of Taiwan," in *Modern Chinese Literature*, vol. 6 (1992): 42.

Similarly, David Der-wei Wang also considers that Chang Ai-ling in her depiction of a worn out urban society, unresponsive to current social conditions is "the most eloquent exponent of the decadent in Chinese literature of the 1940s." See his *Fin-de-siècle Splendour: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 317.

Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang holds that Chu's writing is one facet of postmodernism, and places her firmly in a Taiwanese not a Chinese context: "While formally conventional, the stories present vivid artistic portraits of segments of Taiwan's new urban culture, in which the postmodern condition seems to have appeared."<sup>18</sup>

These three critics, Lee, Wang and Chang have suggested different frameworks into which Chu's work could be fitted. However, in looking for resemblances, and comparing differences in this way they are in danger of obscuring the unique character of Chu's work. Even though these three critics touch on the decadent nature of Chu's writing, none of them discuss what differentiates Chu's writing from that of modern Chinese writers of 1930s and 40s, especially that of Chang Ai-ling. We may ask, while there are stylistic similarities between Chang and Chu, why is it that Chu's traumatic eroticism and desperate indulgence are absent from Chang's writing?

Chu is not yet another imitator of Chang Ai-ling, neither is her writing a superficial echo of European *fin-de-siècle* decadence or the so-called modern Chinese decadent literature. The argument in this thesis is that her fascination with exoticism and sensuality is rooted in the collapse of her early utopian vision in the face of the impact of Nativism in Taiwan. Chu's reaction to this collapse is, as I will show in the conclusion, ambivalent and painfully self-contradictory, with which some distant parallels can be found in ancient China.

However, in viewing Chu's latest works and distinguishing them from the works of European writers categorised as decadent, we should bear in mind two important points:

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<sup>18</sup> Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, "Chu T'ien-wen and Taiwan's Recent Cultural and Literary Trends," in *Modern Chinese Literature*, vol. 6 (1992): 62.

First, decadence is more than a matter of style, but refers specifically to a conflict between ethics and aesthetics. Thus, a decadent is one who is forced by his extreme aestheticism to give precedence to the search for new pleasure over the "maintenance of a consistent morality."<sup>19</sup> Chu is not an Oscar Wilde reflecting on his past: "Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depths for new sensations."<sup>20</sup> Her decadence lies in her themes, not in herself. We may note that Oscar Wilde was writing as a self-indulgent profligate, whereas it would be absurd to suggest that Chu T'ien-wen would ever consider herself to be in the same category. By examining the mainspring of Chu's creative impulse, we can resolve the apparent paradox of a far from profligate person creating sensational fiction which produced shockwaves in society.

Second, commentators on European literature have remarked that Decadence was also a cultural gesture made by privileged aristocrats whose preoccupation with aesthetics was at odds with the plain tastes of the expanding bourgeoisie and the concurrent democratisation of culture and society.<sup>21</sup>

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19. As in *Either/Or*, all we have are two views confronting one another, the aesthetic and the ethical, see Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, trans. David F. and Lillian M. Swenson, rev. Howard A. Johnson, 2 vols. (Garden City, N. Y. : Doubleday Anchor, 1959), I. 32.

20. Oscar Wilde, *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Collins, 1994), p. 1026.

21. The function of the aesthetic movement of the 1890s in Britain has involved the problem of classes. See Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1986), p. 6. As Gagnier points out, the most useful theory of aestheticism in the idiosyncratic form it took in late-Victorian Britain has been that of the Frankfurt school, a theory elaborated by Theodor Adorno and recently rehearsed in Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, in which "they both regarded the function of aestheticism is to negate the meansend rationality of bourgeois everyday life by theorising art as an autonomous, useless realm."

As regards Chu, she had been educated to regard the *shih* as the bedrock of the maintenance of the Chinese cultural tradition with its strong emphasis on the harmony of the nation under the ruler. But, as she had increasing contact with "real" life in her career, and as the world outside Taiwan made an increasing impact on life there, both in increasing democratisation internally and in increasing isolation internationally, so the validity of her traditional values appeared to her to become more and more endangered in the society that was developing. The beginnings of democratisation, which meant progress to many, were regarded by Chu T'ien-wen as the first sign of the destruction of society.

The increasing aesthetic sensuality of Chu's themes and language are to be understood as her reaction to the abandonment of the *shih* moral values which she considered should be at the heart of society. In this connection, the translation of *Shih-chi-mo te hua-li* as *Fin-de-siècle Splendour* by David Der-wei Wang and Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, with all its nineteenth century associations is inappropriate. I shall argue that Chu's writing is not that of the nineteenth-century aristocrat defying the conventions of society, but the reaction of an idealist to the imminent collapse of her aspirations.

However, I would like to reserve these critics' suggestions on the connections between Chu's writing and the nineteenth-century *Fin-de-siècle* movement, and return to the topic after I have discussed all of Chu's works in detail. In the concluding chapter, I shall discuss how Chu's latest fiction relates to that of the nineteenth-century *Fin-de-siècle* movement.

## V. Methodology to be Used in the Thesis

As can be seen from my survey in the previous section, existing studies of Chu's work, although they have yielded highly interesting insights, have the double handicap that each deals only with an individual work of Chu's, and that they lack a common theoretical framework. Because of this they cannot avoid being reductionist. Moreover, a single analytical approach will not be adequate to do justice to the complexity of Chu's works. To understand fully her development as a writer, a combination of methods of analysis have been used in discussing her oeuvre.

The first method is historical/biographical. This consists of a study of Chu's early writing at high school and college, through the published versions of her film scripts up to her latest publications. This is accompanied by an analysis of the literary influences of her formative years, and the extent to which they have been transmuted by her experience to date.

The second method is usually called "close reading." This in-depth analysis recognises the autonomy of the text, treating it as a linguistic structure in which the parts are held together by the tension of their interdependence.

Thirdly, a breadth of analysis is provided by consideration of the text as a product of its cultural context.<sup>22</sup> In particular, a consideration of recent political and economic trends in Taiwan, and their sociological implications are discussed to provide a context for the analysis. In this way, I examine how Chu T'ien-wen changed her traditional Chinese outlook as she came into contact with Nativist and democratic thinking; how her ethical and social ideas were disturbed by the

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22. Michael Payne, "Introduction: Some Versions of Cultural and Critical Theory," in *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, ed. Michael Payne (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 3.

rapid growth of urbanisation and economic prosperity of Taiwan; and how the changes she observed in society affected the position of the extended family as the basic social unit. The thematic and linguistic evolution of Chu's fiction so far make it impossible to get a reliable assessment of her thinking and her writing from the study of individual works, no matter whether her earliest or her latest, in isolation. I shall contend that there is a continuity between the utopianism of her early fiction, through the "neo-realism" of her screenplays, to the sexually powerful, yet elegant style of her latest fiction.

## VI. Outline of the Thesis

Chapter I of this dissertation will start with a brief discussion of Chu T'ien-wen's education, and her family background. I shall note that four people influenced her strongly, and that the start of her career can be considered an extended process of synthesising these influences into a style of her own.

Chapter II will deal with the establishment of the Three-Three Society, and Chu's work during this period when her utopianism was at its peak: her collection of essays *Notes on Tamkang* (Tamkang chi, 1979) and her volume of short stories, *Legend* (Ch'uan-shuo, 1982). A discussion of the Three-Three ideals as embodied in *Notes on Tamkang* and *Legend* will enable us to characterise the effect of her Confucian vision on her writing about family relationships, love, marriage and romantic courtship.

Chapter III will analyse Chu's film stories and examine the first signs of change to the basic ideas acquired during her upbringing. Between 1982 and 1986, Chu turned to screenwriting, helping to launch the Taiwanese New Cinema. The material for discussion will be the collection of her film stories published in

1991. Her achievement during this period, when she was coming under Nativist influence, has been recognised as an important contribution to the creation of a neo-nativist cinema aesthetic.

While writing the film stories, Chu acquired a new perception of the society in which she lived. The focus of her attention shifted from mainlander characters and intellectuals to the life of the ordinary people of Taiwan, and to the burgeoning of a Taiwanese identity. These changes, as I shall demonstrate, were due first to her close association with Nativist film makers, and second to direct competition with films from mainland China.

Chapter IV will consist of an analysis of the collection of seven short stories *The Splendour of the End of the Century*, which demonstrate her acute observation of the rapidly changing society of Taipei, and mark a significant step forward in her maturing as a writer. The object of this chapter will be to detail the corrupted sensual society that Chu depicted. In doing so, the spectrum of decadent behaviour will be illustrated in concrete rather than abstract terms by reference to her treatment of such themes as the decay of the body, sexuality, shattered romantic fantasy, hybrid racial culture and the artificiality of life in the city. Furthermore, Chu shows the extent of the moral decline in the alienated and lonely urban life of Taipei people. Indeed her views are such that we may question whether, in such an indulgent society, there could be any character whom Chu could think of as free from corruption. I shall suggest that the collection as a whole enables us to understand the degree of difficulty the author must have endured in changing her conformist ideas in the face of a reality which was debasing her ideal *shih* to the level of the "common people."

Chapter V will deal with Chu's novel *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*. The novel is a first-person narrative which articulates many facets of love and sexuality through a homosexual's effort to reconcile the conflict between

conformity and immorality, and the meaning of sex and love. Chu appears to be much more liberated in her descriptions of sexuality as compared with those in *Splendour of the End of the Century*.

I shall discuss Chu's considerable ingenuity in adopting academic theories, primarily those of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault in her exposition of the oppression of homosexuals by society. Thus, a major portion of the chapter is concerned with Chu's portrayal of the protagonist not only as a homosexual in a heterosexual society, but as an aspirant *shih* who is considering where his duty lies in a society with whose moral principles he finds himself in disagreement. As I shall argue, this portrayal in turn is a coded reflection of the strains upon Chu in the almost impossible task of maintaining her mainlander political ideals in the face of the indulgent sensuality of life in Taiwan.

The concluding chapter will provide an argument that Chu's "decadent" writing is consistent with her perception of herself in the role of the aspirant *shih*. Chu T'ien-wen's aesthetic sensuality and her utopian political ideas will be compared with those of the Wei-Chin *shih*, and those of some modern Chinese writers of the 1930s and 40s, to show that Chu's decadence is not like that of the former who were in dispute with authority, nor like that of the latter with their aesthetic posturing. It will be argued that her writing is, paradoxically, an expression of both an intense aesthetic sentiment and an immutable sense of social obligation.



## Chapter I

### **Chu T'ien-wen's Formative Years: A Traditional China-Centred *Shih* Family, and Literary Influences**

Amongst readers of contemporary Taiwanese literature, Chu T'ien-wen's family is the most noted literary family in Taiwan today. Not only is there no other family consisting of professional writers, but no other literary family has been so prominent in the Taiwan literary world. The literary and moral atmosphere at Chu's family home was firmly based on Confucian thought and the study of the classics. There was a high moral tone of service to the nation, which influenced Chu greatly.

In this chapter, I shall set out a basic outline of her family background and education, together with an introduction to the four people who influenced her most. I shall argue that her parents were the source of separate, and distinct influences on her writing. She derived her traditional *shih* thinking and emphasis on the writer's craft from her father, but she was not directly affected by her mother's Taiwanese experience during her early writing years. A few years later when she began to work with Nativist film-makers, drawing on her experiences with her mother's Taiwanese/Hakka family would enable her to understand and work successfully as a screen-writer in their different intellectual climate.

### 1.1 Her Father's Family

From the 1960s until he died, Chu T'ien-wen's father, Chu Hsi-ning (1926-1997) was one of the acknowledged leaders in Taiwan literary circles. His family home was in Shantung in East China, a province that saw the start of the Boxer Uprising (1898-1901) at the end of the last century. Around this time, in the late nineteenth century, Chu Hsi-ning's grandfather, a Christian priest was not only active in proselytising amongst the Chinese and teaching them about the West, but also taught foreign missionaries Chinese language and the classics. He was a traditional scholar who loved to apply the thinking of Confucius and Mencius to the interpretation of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Chu Hsi-ning's father, the eldest son, taught the official Chinese language (kuan-hua, ie. Mandarin) to foreign missionaries, and later moved to Chiangsu and became a landowner and entrepreneur milk supplier. His uncle was also an accomplished linguist and translator of the Bible who lectured in religion at the Chin-ling College of Theology (Chin-ling shen hsüeh-yüan), Nanking.

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<sup>1</sup>. Chu Hsi-ning's family had a strong belief in the possibility of attaining a state of universal harmony amongst humanity. For instance, Chu Hsi-ning thought that Christianity having started in the East was now losing ground in the West, could renew itself only through Eastern civilisation. Their belief can be seen as rooted in the cultural influence of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). A number of Ming officials believed that Confucianism and Christianity could be reconciled, and had intellectual exchanges with foreign missionaries with the object of using both Chinese and Western philosophies to create a powerful and wealthy nation; they were also attracted by the Christian concept of Paradise. The rise of Christianity was the result of a search for hope in an age of turmoil. See Sun Shang-yang's analysis, *Chi-tu chiao yü ming-mo ju-hsüeh* (The Christianity and Confucian Studies of Ming Dynasty) (Peking: Tung-fang ch'u-pan-she, 1994), p. 160.

Chu Hsi-ning was the youngest of eleven children. Because of the extensive contacts that the family had with Western culture, his siblings and he had a more liberal upbringing than would have been considered usual for the time. His elder brothers and sisters studied away from home, and chose their own marriage partners. During college vacations, Chu Hsi-ning had the benefit of their talk of current events and discussions about the May Fourth Movement and literature.

His brothers and sisters became cadres in the Nationalist Northern Expeditionary Army (1926-1928), and afterwards returned to their village in Shantung with the aim of modernising it. Their father, the entrepreneur, was very supportive of his children; and gave some of his land to them so that they were able to develop an experimental modern community with public recreational and educational facilities, and even to start a local newspaper.

When Chu Hsi-ning was twelve years old in 1938, the province where he lived was invaded by the Japanese army and began to feel the impact of the civil war. He fled to a junior high school in another province that was under the protection of the KMT. When the school was forced to close as the war zone expanded, he went to study at a high school in Anhui, and then he followed in his brother's footsteps to study art in the School of Fine Arts in Hang-chou, Che-chiang.

In those years under the influence of his sisters in Nanking he became a fan of the modern writer, Chang Ai-ling. He said that Chang Ai-ling's "bold and explicit" writing about love and marriage had opened up a new world to him. In contrast to the left-wing writers, who explored sombre political themes, he found

Chang Ai-ling's focus on everyday life very attractive with its rich "description of visual detail."<sup>2</sup>

Even though Chu Hsi-ning's first attempt at creative writing was inspired by Chang Ai-ling, he did not write on courtship and marriage as Chang did. His first story "Westernisation" was published in the *Central Daily News* (Chung-yang jih-pao) in 1947, in which he contrasted Chinese and Western cultures to show the absurdity of those Chinese people who tried to imitate Western ways. His early explorations of Western culture, and the antics of some of his fellow countrymen who tried to imitate Western ways led him to be wary of cultural integration, and made him value his own Chinese culture.

In 1949, when he was twenty years old, Chu Hsi-ning joined the KMT forces under Chiang Kai-shek in their retreat to Taiwan. His admiration for Chang Ai-ling's work can be gauged from the fact the only book he chose to carry with him was Chang Ai-ling's *Romances* (Ch'uan-ch'i).

Leaving aside the military significance of the retreat, we can understand the feelings of educated Chinese finding themselves "stranded" on this undeveloped, insignificant island off the coast of Fukien. Having been occupied by the Japanese as a colonial territory from 1895 until 1945, it was, as Chu Hsi-ning said, "not printed in the same colour on the map as China, but as Japan,"<sup>3</sup> "On the map there are no indications of Taiwan's topographical features, no sign of mountains, rivers, cities, or railroads."<sup>4</sup>

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2. Chu Hsi-ning, "Yi-chao feng-yün erh-shih-pa nien: Chi ch'i-meng ho ti-hsi wo te Chang Ai-ling" (Twenty Eight Years: Remembrance of Chang Ai-ling who Enlightened and Uplifted Me), in *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), May 30-31, 1971.

3. Chu Hsi-ning, "Wo yü Taiwan" (Taiwan and Me), in *You-ch'ing sui-yüeh si-shih nien* (The Forty Years of Emotion), ed. Editorial Board of Literary Supplement of *Hsin-sheng Pao* (Taipei: Taiwan Hsin-sheng Pao, 1985), p. 2.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Like almost all Taiwan mainlanders, Chu Hsi-ning regarded the island as a temporary stop-over to rebuild strength for the recovery of the mainland. It is hard now to believe that such an ambition could ever have been taken seriously, but the dogma of military recovery has persisted until quite recent years, being replaced now by a belief in the economic superiority of the Taiwan system. The importance of the dogma, however, is the leading part it played in determining the poor relations between the mainlanders and the local population.

Chu Hsi-ning's feelings for the "lost" country and extended family that he had left behind, the modern Chinese writers he admired, and the classical Chinese culture he venerated were passed on to his daughter. They formed the main inspiration for her early work and became a lasting influence on her thinking, which Chu T'ien-wen later referred to as her "nation-family myth" (*kuo-tsu shen-hua*).<sup>5</sup> This term summarises a potent factor in the development of Chu T'ien-wen's literary imagination and career.

Chu Hsi-ning's paternal influence was, no doubt, reinforced by his successful career in the army and the KMT regime. As a writer of serious fiction, he produced many well-known short stories and novels, winning a number of important prizes and was active in literary administration, organising writing contests, and chairing academic seminars.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, while still appreciating the merits of modern Chinese literature, Chu Hsi-ning also perceived himself as a custodian of traditional Chinese values. He considered that the writer's link to his or her national culture is like a blood

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<sup>5</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup>. Chu Hsi-ning also achieved the rank of colonel. His eminence, and his loyalty to the KMT government were confirmed by his selection to represent Chiang Kai-shek in the ceremony to commemorate the martyrs (of the Battle of August the Twenty-Third) in 1964. See Chu Hsi-ning, *Pa-erh-san chu* (The Battle of August the Twenty-Third) (Taipei: San-san, 1979), p. 891.

relationship: "The birth of a great novelist is not due to his parents or his great ancestors. It is implicit in the development of his culture."<sup>7</sup> We need not concern ourselves here with any justification for this statement, what is beyond doubt is the influence that such thinking had on Chu T'ien-wen. As would be expected of a Chinese father, the names Chu Hsi-ning selected for his children reflected his intellectual interest. The given names of his first two daughters "wen" and "hsin" were chosen from the first two words from a respected book of literary theory *The Heart of Literature and Carved Dragon* (Wen-hsin tiaolung).<sup>8</sup>

After retiring from the Army to become a professional writer in 1972 at the age of 48, Chu Hsi-ning continued to play an important part in Taiwan literary life by organising, lecturing, and judging literary competitions. During the 1970s at a time when the May Fourth writers were not acceptable to the authorities, he was very influential in the publication of modern Chinese literature. This fact indicates that he was a man of some independence of thought, not just a blindly loyal KMT writer peddling the Party line.

Although he had said that he had not intended to interfere with his children's choice of career, nonetheless, the milieu in which they were brought up gave his three dutiful daughters a thorough grounding in his traditional values. They had access to his library which he estimated at three thousand volumes ranging from classical to modern Chinese literature, amongst them works by Lu Hsün (very little known in Taiwan at that time), Shen T's'ung-wen, and Chang Ailing.<sup>9</sup> According to Chu T'ien-hsin, the house was always full of literary friends

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7. Chu Hsi-ning, *Chu Hsi-ning tzu hsüan-chi* (Chu Hsi-ning's Selected Stories) (Taipei: Li-ming wen-ha, 1974), p. 3.

8. "Carved Dragon" is a Chinese expression for a highly embellished literary style.

9. Chu Hsi-ning, "Tien-hsin yüan-ch'i" (About Chu T'ien-hsin), in *Wei-liao* (Unfinished), by Chu T'ien-hsin (Taipei: Lien-ching, 1982), p. 5.

discussing literary topics.<sup>10</sup> It would have been strange indeed if Chu T'ien-wen, being a member of the cultural aristocracy and with such good family connections in Taiwan literary circles, had not wanted to start a writing career herself.

## 1.2 Her Mother's Family

We have seen that Chu's father was a man of some independence of mind in literary matters. The same can be said of his approach to marriage, for he married a Taiwanese woman, a daughter of a respected Hakka family from Miao-li, Hsinchu in the south of Taiwan. Chu T'ien-wen's maternal grandfather was a doctor who had been recruited into the Japanese forces between 1943-1945 to serve in the Pacific War. On his return to Miao-li, he had set up a private clinic. His daughter Liu Mu-sha (original name, Liu Hui-mei), Chu T'ien-wen's mother, had been born in 1935, so she was educated up to the fifth grade in the Japanese colonial system, and thereafter in the KMT's Mandarin based system. However, Liu's mother and some other family members had been educated in Japan, and Liu herself became a scholar in Japanese and an expert translator of Japanese literature.

Liu was a happy young woman who loved outdoor sports and singing as well as literature. It was through tennis that she was introduced to Chu Hsi-ning.<sup>11</sup> The friendship flourished, but Liu was afraid that her parents would not

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<sup>10</sup>. Chu T'ien-hsin, *Shih yi shih wang* (Time Past) (Taipei: Yüan-liu ch'u-pan-she, 1989), pp. 18-20.

<sup>11</sup>. Liu Mu-sha came to know Chu Hsi-ning in an interesting way. Chu saw in the newspaper the name of Liu Yü-lan in a listing of a woman's tennis tournament. Believing that this was his long-lost girl friend from mainland China, he wrote a letter to her and

agree to her marrying Chu Hsi-ning. Her Hakka parents, and the other ethnic groups (Aborigines, and the Fukien Chinese as well as the Hakka<sup>12</sup>) already on the island when the KMT forces arrived deeply resented the arrogant and oppressive rule of the KMT. Liu being afraid that they would not permit her to marry a mainlander; and fearing that they might arrange a marriage for her, eloped with Chu Hsi-ning in 1954. However, the parents quickly accepted the marriage.

Chu T'ien-wen always considered that her parents' marriage was the happy result of genuine love, and her mother to be an idealistic young woman who had sacrificed her comfortable life to marry a poor young soldier. She wrote many semi-biographical stories about her parents' love and marriage: "Only during proof-reading did I discover, to my surprise, that the section 'A House Glued Together from Writing Paper' alone has numerous references to my parents and myself. I was afraid to be seen as a narcissistic person; or at least a navel writer. Such writers spend all their lives contemplating their navels, and try to find other people who can be interested, in coming to have a look too."<sup>13</sup>

Liu had worked as a writer of short stories, however with the birth of her children, she switched to the translation of Japanese literature. Thus, we can see that the difference between the family backgrounds of her father and her mother gave Chu T'ien-wen the possibility of a culturally enriching childhood.

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they arranged to meet. Not knowing what to expect, Liu Yü-lan brought along her tennis doubles partner, who turned out to be Liu Mu-sha. Liu and Chu started to date, and decided to get married after corresponding for two years.

<sup>12</sup>. For a concise discussion on the ethnic conflict in Taiwan, see John F. Copper, *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 54.

<sup>13</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, "Preface" in *HPTKS*, p. 9.



### 1.3 Childhood in the Civil Service Community

Chu T'ien-wen, the eldest child, was born on August 24, 1956, in Huangpu Village, a so-called "civil service community" (chüan-ts'un),<sup>14</sup> which was part of the Fengshan Military Academy, near Kaohsiung in the south of Taiwan. When she was three years old, her father was promoted to propaganda officer in the Ministry of Defence. This led to postings to various bases in and around Taoyuan and Taipei. Finally, on her father's retirement in 1972, when Chu was sixteen, the family moved to their own home in Chingmei, a major university district of Taipei. Up to this point Chu had always lived around military bases in a strongly mainlander culture.

Judging from the family photos printed in a book about this well-known family, *A Family of Novelists* (Hsiao-shuo chia-tsu, 1986), Chu had a very comfortable childhood. The photos illustrate the way the three daughters stood at the door with their mother every morning to say Good-Bye to their father, and many other photos illustrate the closeness of the family.<sup>15</sup> Her descriptions are evocative of a contented family life:

The whole family moved to Taoyüan Ch'iao-ai New Village, (we had) a courtyard and a living room; the kitchen we built ourselves. I remember to this day that on rainy days my mother would wear a bamboo hat while

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<sup>14</sup>. The form of words is used to describe the KMT settlements on Taiwan. The KMT regime was both a military dictatorship and exercised a parallel civil administration based on the last KMT government on the mainland. The functionaries of the regime usually had both a military and a civil role. The KMT and its supporters were housed in settlements akin both to military barracks and to settlers' colonies.

<sup>15</sup>. Chu Hsi-ning, *Hsiao-shuo chia-tsu* (A Family of Novelists) (Taipei: Hsi-tai, 1986) p. 53.

cooking. She would sing, her round face glowing red. Sha-la sha-la (Sssss. . . ) the sizzling sound of cooking brightened the incessant plum rains<sup>16</sup>. . . I looked at father's and mother's faces, felt completely peaceful, and happily continued playing with (my) sisters. . . Every afternoon I sat with mother listening to the radio drama Sweet Home. . . .<sup>17</sup>

Chu took a romantic view of her life in the civil service community, as she said it is "a kind of colour, a melody and a fragrance that remained forever somewhere" in her life.<sup>18</sup> The people around her were all associated with the military. Her father had no relatives with him on Taiwan, and his army comrades were seen by Chu T'ien-wen as her uncles. In her essay, Chu describes these fellows and their personalities as joyful, righteous, loyal, and versatile men; brave and honourable like her father who had overcome great difficulties in the emigration to Taiwan.<sup>19</sup>

This feeling, which was general among the mainlanders was one of the factors which contributed to the feeling of privilege they felt compared with the various groups already resident on the island, whom they referred to, in mainland style, as the "common people" (lao-pai-hsing). The feeling of privilege was accentuated for Chu T'ien-wen by her father's stories about his family's life in China -- an idyllic picture of country life on a large farm in beautiful scenery.

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16. Spring rainy season when it typically rains for weeks.

17. Chu T'ien-wen, "Ch'un-shan-hsing" (Walk with Spring Clothes; Lit. The Journey of the Youth), *HPTKS*, p.72.

18. Chu T'ien-wen, "Wo-ke yüeh p'ai-huai" (A Song in the Moonlight), *HPTKS*, p. 78.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

Chu had an image of herself as a tomboy playing battle games.<sup>20</sup> She was certainly attracted to the Military Academy and identified strongly with the brave male or female heroes from Chinese folklore and imagined herself horse riding, galloping through the green grassland of China.

Her early autobiographical essays present scenes of military school life and a romantic evocation of what it meant to be a brave officer enjoying the respect and perquisites of the uniform. One is described in "A Song in the Moonlight" (Wo-ke yüeh p'ai-huai, 1981):

The naval officers with (their) snow-white uniforms were exactly handsome. . . I have often laughed at those romantic stories in films and fiction where young girls fall in love with smart officers, regarding them as extremely shallow and vulgar. But, look at me, am I not gradually falling too? <sup>21</sup>

Chu describes officers from the military school as well-educated, emotionally contented, and perfectly good-natured. They are portrayed not as men of war, but as innocent boys playing with their toy weapons. She describes with a feeling of envy an officer's dream of flying his plane and his desire to be the first one to fly over the mainland on the day of "returning to China": "Under the big wind and bright sun, his dazzling orange flying jacket looks like a beautiful flame tied to a tall phoenix tree. The sky of that boy's world is so boundless and far away, so pre that it is entirely free of sorrow. Suddenly, it makes the tears well up in my breast."<sup>22</sup> She thought that officers of this kind

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20. Chu Hsi-ning, *Hsiao-shuo chia-tsu*, p. 290.

21. Chu T'ien-wen, "Wo-ke yüeh p'ai-huai", *HPTKS*, p. 85.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

were the sort of men to lead the nation into a bright future. She encouraged and supported her high school boyfriend when he decided to enter a military school. Her patriotism made her believe that all military school entrants were patriots, devoting their lives to the country.

#### **1.4 Childhood Experience of Rural Life**

For Chu T'ien-wen, her paternal family in China existed only at second-hand through her father, but her mother's family home was something she could experience directly. Chu's mother, the youngest daughter of her family, remained very close to her parents and often visited them with Chu T'ien-wen and her two sisters. The summer holidays spent with her maternal grandparents were later used by Chu as material for both her autobiographical essays and for fiction. Her grandfather was a strict disciplinarian, with old-style teaching methods. He aimed to instil the traditional ideas on family relationships and personal behaviour which he had followed himself. When he discovered that his grandchildren had broken the rules, he would let them know indirectly that he had found them out -- so his bark may have been worse than his bite as far as his grandchildren were concerned. Whatever the merits of his methods they seem to have been effective:

Grandpa forbade us to eat any snacks or food with artificial colour. Once grandpa caught me (eating ice-cream) upstairs and shouted at me to stop. This made me so frightened, I ran into the courtyard, and hid behind the pump of the well. Grandpa did not come after me, and only stood for a while under the kitchen eaves, then went back inside. I looked at the

empty cone in my hand -- the two scoops of red bean ice-cream had fallen off during my escape. I remembered the terror and shame of running away, and after that I was never tempted by the honking (of the ice-cream vendors).<sup>23</sup>

Chu's maternal great-grandmother lived very close to her grandparents. Her house was an old fashioned Taiwanese farm house with the smells of animals and left-over food, which contrasted with the grandparents' Japanese style house with expensive hard wood floors and a beautiful garden. Chu felt very uneasy there:

For quite a long time, I was never happy to go to great-grandmother's house unless absolutely necessary, as the chickens and ducks she raised always came into the house to shit. Especially the kitchen, which was the only way to the innermost bedroom. To me it was just like a minefield that shortened my life each time I passed through. I did not like the steaming smoke and the sour, rotten smell when the pigs' food was being cooked, either.<sup>24</sup>

Her great grandmother, however, despite objections from the grandparents, took Chu to buy food from street vendors.

Her great grandmother's house apart, Chu's visits to the countryside had a cultivated, upper-class urbane elegance and style: "Grandmother really loved cutting flowers. At any time, her pockets would overflow with sweet honey

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23. Chu T'ien-wen, "Chu-ch'i yi-jih" (A Day in Chu-chi), *HPTKS*, p. 228.

24. Chu T'ien-wen, "Chia, shih yung kao-chih hu ch'i lai te" (A House Glued Together from Writing Paper), *HPTKS*, p. 97.

fragrance of magnolias."<sup>25</sup> Her experience of Taiwanese village life would one day prove to be extremely useful.

### 1.5 Early School Years

After attending Chungshan Elementary School in Taipei, at twelve years old Chu entered Neihs Junior High School in the year when a new "modernised" education system came into effect. At first, Chu liked the new system:

I was lucky to be at school in this period when the Junior High School system had just been started. It had the freshness and sparseness of an initial period. The close and respectful relations of the tutor-pupil system, which the school still kept, gave me a very solid and enlightening education. . . .<sup>26</sup>

This good opinion may have been due to her encountering Ho Hsiu-li, a teacher of Chinese language and literature who, she later said, had induced a love of writing in her.

It may be that this relationship persuaded her that she wished to retain the more traditional personal teacher/student relationship as part of the more impersonal structure of the more modern educational institution.

The trend of modern education, Chu gradually came to realise, was diverging from the education of her parents and grandparents. Modern primary and junior high schools did not teach the *Four Books*, but taught modern

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<sup>25</sup>. *Ibid.*, *HPTKS*, p. 99.

<sup>26</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, "Ch'un-shan hsing", *HPTKS*, p. 74.

language using modern materials. Her father criticised the schools for using "children's stories" (t'ung-hua) and fairy tales. He felt that they would not give the child a basic foundation in Chinese culture: "Prince and Princess stories are used to pander to children. Real life plays no part in them, no wonder the children often discard them as they grow up. Whereas if a child had read Tang poetry or *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as young as possible. . . they could learn all sorts of human interaction in different situations. . . they may not fully grasp it at the time. . . but as they grow up, their understanding will increase."<sup>27</sup> Influenced by her father, Chu T'ien-wen bemoaned the fact that modern study methods appeared to concentrate on uniformity and efficiency at the expense of the development of the individual.

### 1.6 High School: First Efforts at Writing

Pressure for uniformity, efficiency and, in addition, success in the university entrance examination was a feature of her high school, Chungshan Girl's High School (Chungshan nü-kao), the second best female high school in Taipei. It was her experiences there that formed the material for her first creative writing. In the summer of 1972, her first year at the school, Chu T'ien-wen wrote her first short story "Still Shining Diligently" (Jeng-jan tsai yin-ch'in shan-yao che) as a relief from the pressure of her study. It was accepted for publication in the "Literary Supplement" of the *United Daily* (Lien-he fu-k'an).

The story is about the pressure for conformity in a girl's school. There are two girls of contrasting personalities -- one is a well-behaved, hard-working student who has a teenage "crush" on the other, an outgoing, uninhibited rule

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27. Chu Hsi-ning, "T'ien-hsin yüan ch'i" in *Wei-liao*, pp. 5-6.

breaker who becomes a role model for her more demure friend. However, the latter's attempts to copy her friend in flouting school rules are doomed to failure by her ingrained response to authority. When she copies her friend by shortening her skirt length, a first warning from her teacher is sufficient to make her revert to the standard length. The reason for her outgoing friend's success in her rule breaking is that she has musical talent to the extent of performing solo at a concert, whereas the protagonist's only hobby is trying to improve her chances in examinations. At the concert, the protagonist learns that her friend and role model is to go abroad to study music. She feels sad about the impending parting from her friend, and perhaps slightly envious that her friend has a way out of the school system whereas she has little control over her fate, and is like a neon street light "still shining diligently" in the dark.<sup>28</sup>

The timorous young girl's desire to be impetuous corresponds to two aspects of Chu's own personality. Throughout her career, she has voiced her views on issues like the inadequacy of the school system in dealing with students' emotional problems, yet she has hesitated to get embroiled in the kind of oppositional activism that could be liable to incur penalty from the authorities.

This very first effort by Chu T'ien-wen already reveals the stylistic influence of Chang Ai-ling. Chu told us that reading the *Collected Short Stories of Chang Ai-ling* (Chang Ai-ling hsiao-shuo chi, 1968), given to her by her father, had made her an enthusiast for Chang's work.<sup>29</sup> It would hardly be fair to Chu to compare her early work with Chang's mature work, but one example comparing sentences from each of their works will suffice to illustrate Chu's debt to Chang.

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<sup>28</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, "Jeng-jan tsai yin-chin shan-yao che" (Still Shining Diligently), *CTSHC*, p. 22.

<sup>29</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 36.



Chu: I turn my face to look at her, her half-profile is saturated with sunlight, her pale blue complexion suffused with blushes. . . the eyelashes long and the nose straight and prominent. . . .<sup>30</sup>

Chang: The shadow of the upper half of her body falls across the newspaper. She raises her eyebrows, turning back to get closer to the light. As she turns aside. . . her profile. . . from the forehead to the jaw.<sup>31</sup>

The descriptions of the way that the light falls in the profile in each sentence are obviously similar, and the structure of the sentences is directly comparable.

Chu's second story "Feigned Sorrow" (Ch'iang shuo te ch'ou, 1972) is also concerned with the effect on students of the pressure to study and their lack of opportunity to develop socially, in this case as affecting relations between the students. The members of a class are shocked to hear of the death of one of them in a car accident. However, while they try to express sympathy, they do not feel personal sadness because they are each bound up in their own study problems, and have not formed real inter-personal relationships. Chu gives a harsh portrayal of the lack of feeling among the students through the self-reproach of the protagonist for knowing virtually nothing about her fellow pupil, Chang Shu-hua: "Since I have no real feeling (for her), and lack a rich imagination, all I can tell are those details which I have already repeated over and over, to the degree that I myself feel guilt and loathing about it. . . ."<sup>32</sup>

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30. Chu T'ien-wen, "Jeng-jan tsai yin-chin shan-yao che", *CTSHC*, p. 12.

31. Chang Ai-ling, "Nien-ch'ing te shih-hou" (The Time of Youth), in *Chang Ai-ling hsiao-shuo-chi* (Collected Short Stories of Chang Ai-ling) (Taipei: Huang-kuan, 1990), p. 446.

32. Chu T'ien-wen, "Ch'iang shuo te ch'ou" (Feigned Sorrow), *CTSHC*, p. 32.

In the next two years, Chu published two more stories. "Sorrow Beyond Words" (Tsen yi-ke ch'ou-tzu liao-te, 1973) describes a young girl's infatuation with her male teacher, and her feelings of jealousy towards his wife and newly born baby. "Fate" (Yüan, 1974) consists of a young girl's inner monologue on her feelings of turmoil and desolation at seeing her boyfriend leaving for military school.<sup>33</sup> In these stories, Chu began to adopt Chang Ai-ling's favourite topic -- love and marriage, in writing her teenage romances from the female viewpoint.

### 1.7 Writing at College

In 1974, at the age of eighteen, Chu T'ien-wen entered Tamkang College as an English major. By her own account, she explored works of nineteenth century European literature, including works by Tolstoy, Flaubert and Turgenev. She was one of the few English literature majors to take classes in Chinese poetry. Even with her broadened literary horizons, shortly after beginning her course work here, she found time to write and get published her fifth story "Rebirth of the women" (Nü chih su, 1975), which describes a young girl's joy in romantic love and her worries about pregnancy.

At the time she started her college course, Chu had intended to concentrate on academic life. However, she was stimulated by one of her lecturers, Wang Chin-p'ing to continue creative writing rather than producing standardised product based on the American theoretical approach.<sup>34</sup> Wang, who had studied in the United States, felt an urge to search out his own cultural roots, and considered that higher level education in Taiwan was too

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<sup>33</sup>. These stories are collected in Chu's first collection of short stories, *CTSHC*.

<sup>34</sup>. "Mu-yang-ch'iao tsai-chien" (Farewell, Shepherd Bridge), *TC*, p. 20.

Americanised. As chief editor of the *Tamkang Weekly*, Wang strongly urged students to become active in literature and published their creative and critical work. He played a crucial role in encouraging Taiwanese cultural consciousness amongst students at Tamkang.

As a result of Wang's encouragement, Chu's fiction writing developed rapidly. In 1976, she rewrote the 16th century vernacular comic story "Magistrate Ch'iao Muddles Matchmaking" (Ch'iao t'ai-shou luan-tien yüan-yang p'u) as a modern short story "The Modern Story of Magistrate Ch'iao" (Ch'iao tai-shou hsin-chi), in a semi-romantic style satirising the Existentialist fashion of the 1970s. This story, written in her junior year at the age of twenty, won the Third Prize in the First United Daily Fiction Award.

In "The Modern Story of Magistrate Ch'iao," Chu portrays a teenager who is not satisfied with her boyfriend because he is "sporty" and lacks philosophical insight. The protagonist uses a computer matching service to find a boyfriend closer to her desires. The new boyfriend does indeed like to talk about philosophy -- but mainly about the hopelessness of the world. She soon finds the new boyfriend's sombre thinking and lack of initiative unbearable and goes back to her previous, optimistic and energetic boyfriend.

During the 1970s, Existentialist writers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus were popular models for some of the young writers in Taiwan. Chu T'ien-wen found Existentialism interesting, and was fascinated by the sense of loss and alienation, which found expression in the feelings of alienation in her first two stories. But, this is not to say that Chu had consciously taken a vulgarised Existentialist approach in her first two stories, rather she had only a typical adolescent's thinking about the meaning of life which had some superficial similarity to Existentialism. Indeed, at this stage in her intellectual maturing, Existentialism should have a natural fit with her own thoughts. However,

compared with the two early stories, the ending of "The Modern Story of Magistrate Ch'iao" is more upbeat and positive in its approach to the future.

The shift in the emotional tone of Chu's writing from adolescent sentimentalism to an upbeat and positive mood was due to her acquaintance at this time with the sixty-eight year old Hu Lan-ch'eng, who was teaching at the Chinese Culture University in Taipei. Hu began to exert a more traditional, psychologically optimistic influence on Chu. A journalist, and ex-husband of Chang Ai-ling, and notorious collaborator with the Japanese of World War II, Hu met Chu's father through the latter's interest in writers of the 1940s, in particular, Chang Ai-ling. Because of her own admiration for Chang, Chu was also interested to meet the man who had been Chang's husband. After meeting Hu, Chu read his autobiography, and was profoundly impressed by his writing. Later Hu became private tutor for a period to Chu Hsi-ning's children. From that time on, Chu had a lasting respect for Hu, who, during his lifetime, encouraged her in her writing career.

### **1.8 Fiction for National Salvation**

It was Chang Ai-ling who provided an indirect link for Chu T'ien-wen with the modern Chinese writers of the early twentieth century who first asserted the right to a respectable place in the literary canon for the novel. Had it not been for their efforts to improve the status of popular fiction, then Chu could not have taken the idealistic view of the value of fiction writing with which she started, and continued her career.

During the May Fourth period, the traditional low status of the fiction writer (hsiao-shuo-chia) compared with the scholar underwent a radical revision.

In earlier times, Pan Ku in the first century B.C. had placed the fiction writer as the last of ten categories of writer, and admonished that only the first nine were worth reading since fiction is "gossip and hearsay" in the streets.<sup>35</sup> Thus, fiction was traditionally considered as lacking concern for moral teaching, and in fact often of a frivolous nature. However, a group of May Fourth writers promoted the idea first put forward by Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao (1873-1929) that fiction could "save the nation."<sup>36</sup> Lu Hsün, when he was studying medicine in Japan in 1905, decided that the greater danger to his country was spiritual rather than physical degeneration, and decided to become a writer.<sup>37</sup> Since then, writers have often come to be forced to adopt specific agendas by both left-wing and right-wing regimes in China. In the twentieth century, the propaganda value of the arts generally has been recognised and used by politicians of every persuasion.

While Chu T'ien-wen did not feel the political pressure of the right wing regime under which she lived, the four major literary influences on her, which will be discussed in detail in the following sections, were all politically on the right and exerted implicit pressure throughout her development.

Her father, Chu Hsi-ning was actually a propagandist for the KMT regime, and while his works were generally of a quality that transcended such a description, he can definitely be categorised as an anti-Communist. Her mother, Liu Mu-sha, as far as is known, did not express political opinions on current topics. However, she had made known her disapproval of the actions of the

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<sup>35</sup>. Pan Ku: *Han Shu* (History of the Han Dynasties) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), vol. 6, p. 1745.

<sup>36</sup>. See C. T. Hsia, "Yen Fu and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao as Advocates of New Fiction," in *Chinese Approaches to Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch'i-ch'ao*, ed. Adele Austin Rickett, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 221-57.

<sup>37</sup>. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company), p. 240.

KMT when they retreated to Taiwan; we may well feel that it was her loyalty to her husband which prevented her from expressing nativist views openly.

Chang Ai-ling's bourgeois background made her a natural anti-Communist, an orientation which was reinforced by her experience of everyday life under Communism in Shanghai in the early 1950s. Hu Lan-ch'eng's political affiliations were more opportunistic, depending on the political situation at the time, his pretensions as a thinker on civilisation and culture were more important to him, but he too would associate himself with the KMT regime.

Thus, we can hypothesise a lineage for Chu as a writer starting with the Confucian *shih*, going through the acquisition of literary respectability and patriotism with the May Fourth writers via Chang Ai-ling, and emerging, under the influence of her family and their circle as a right wing writer of campus romances. A characterisation that at this time in her career there was no reason to think she would want, or be able, to discard.

### 1.9 Anti-Communist Political Stance: Chu Hsi-ning

I have described the general historical background to Chu's formative years. However, in order to understand the derivation of her thinking, the following sections provide a more systematic analysis of the lives, and literary and political ideas of the four people who were the main influences on Chu T'ien-wen.

The first, and most important is Chu Hsi-ning. We have seen that Chu Hsi-ning's working career was spent with the KMT regime finishing up as a senior officer. The shape of his career was determined not just by his literature, but also by the key role that propaganda and indoctrination were predicted to



play in the eventual successful accomplishment of the national mission to "recover the mainland" (fan-kung ta-lu). The KMT considered that one of the crucial factors in the Communist victory was the strong support mobilised among writers.

In 1951, the "Chinese Literature Association" (Chung-kuo wen-yi hsieh-hui) was established in Taiwan with a strict instruction to use literature to serve the political and military mission of the KMT.<sup>38</sup> The object was in complete agreement with Chu Hsi-ning's own beliefs. With his knowledge and experience of the brutal war in mainland China, it was quite natural for him to write anti-Japanese and anti-Communist stories. He blamed the Communists for causing the "loss of China", and forcing him and the other mainlanders to suffer the pain of exile. His first collection of short stories *Love of the Flaming Torch* (Ta huo-chü te ai, 1952)<sup>39</sup> forcefully promoted the military and anti-Communist spirit of the KMT.

In his collection of short stories *Head for the Sun* (Pen-hsiang t'ai-yang, 1971), his condemnation of Communism is expressed by telling of the soldiers' anguish in having to leave their hometowns on mainland China. One of the characters in the title story shouts in his patriotic devotion to Chiang Kai-shek:

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38. Helmut Martin points out that the name of "Chung-kuo wen-yi" shows that the KMT government took a hands-off approach towards Taiwan's localist *bentu*-literature and rather emphasised a concept of "ROC Chinese literature." See Helmut Martin, "The History of Taiwanese Literature: Towards Cultural-Political Identity," Published by Richard Wilhelm-Übersetzungszentrum, Ruhr University, Bochum, No. 3 (June, 1995): 2.

39. *Ta huo-chü te ai* (The Love of Flame Torch) (Taipei: Ch'ung-kuang wen-yi ch'u-pan-she, 1952).

"We have suffered so much, and been subject to such humiliation to be here (Taiwan). . . Our hope (Chiang Kai-shek) is here."<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, Chu Hsi-ning's anti-Communism did not spring only from his experiences and his duty as a propaganda officer. He also strongly believed that Communism had absolutely nothing in common with Confucian humanism. In his opinion, a pre-requisite of the recovery of the mainland was the achievement of social order; and that social order could only be achieved if society showed respect for the Tao, cared for the Earth and cherished the People. The Confucian emphasis on harmony between the environment and the people: "Heaven, Earth, and People" (t'ien, ti, jen)<sup>41</sup> is central to Chu Hsi-ning's philosophy -- which he applied in playing his part in the task of recovering the mainland.

A number of Chu Hsi-ning's works, such as *The General and I* (Chiang-chün yü wo, 1976) and *By Command of the General* (Chiang chün ling, 1989) depicted the KMT party cadres' dedication to the army and their sincere concern for the people.<sup>42</sup> His novel *The Battle of August Twenty-Third* (Pa erh san p'ao-chan, 1979) which was based on a fierce exchange of fire between Taiwan and China in the 1950s, depicts the soldier's patriotic fervour in fighting for his

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40. Chu Hsi-ning, *Pen-hsiang t'ai-yang* (Head for the Sun) (Taipei: Lu-chün ch'u-pan-she, 1971), p. 173.

41. The idea of "t'ien, ti, jen" can be also found in a Taoist work, *Kuan Tsu*. The philosophy behind it is to reduce individuality and to emphasise on the idea of being submissive to the established order, since "t'ien" means "t'ien-li" (The Way of Heaven), which is the "abstracted form for symbol for the feudal order."

See Liu Tse-hua, *Chung-kuo ch'uan-tung cheng-chih ssu-hsiang fan-ssu* (Rethinking the Traditional Chinese Political Thought) (Peking: San-lien shu-tien, 1987), pp. 74, 133.

42. See Chu Hsi-ning's *Chiang-chün yü wo* (The General and I) (Taipei: Hung-fan, 1976) and *Chiang chün ling* (By Command of the General) (Taipei: Yüan-liu, 1989).



country, and the solidarity between soldiers and the ordinary people while confronting the enemy, the Communists.<sup>43</sup>

Chu T'ien-wen was inspired by Chu Hsi-ning's depiction of the admirable behaviour of men and women in the heat of battle, and the unity of the army and the people in their common purpose.<sup>44</sup> Her father's writing helped to confirm Chu in feeling an obligation to society to resist Communism. Chang Ai-ling also had high praise for Chu Hsi-ning's collected stories *Molten Iron* (T'ieh-Chiang, 1963) writing to him saying: "From my point of view, the courage of (your characters) can only be found in the Warring States period (403-221 B.C.). This is the thing that I and the most of our fellow countrymen have lost and still lack."<sup>45</sup> Chu Hsi-ning was gratified by Chang's praise of one of his works. It will be clear that there was no room in Chu Hsi-ning's thinking for shilly-shallying or compromise, a feature he passed on to the young Chu T'ien-wen in full measure.

### 1.10 Hakka Roots: Liu Mu-sha

Next we come to Liu Mu-sha, whose local gentry family provided a genuine Taiwanese/Hakka base for Chu T'ien-wen in gaining experience of local life. With her Taiwanese background, Liu Mu-sha had everyday social contacts with the world outside the mainlander community: "In my address book, except those literary friends, tennis partners, relatives, editors, there is one section,

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43. Chu Hsi-ning, *Pa-erh-san chu*.

44. Chu T'ien-wen, "Su-tu Pa-erh-san chu" (Reading on The Battle of August Twenty-Third ), *SCM*, p. 51.

45. Chu Hsi-ning, "yi-chao feng-yün erh-shih-pa nien", in *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), May 30-31, 1971.

which consisted of miscellaneous people, such as: Pork Lin, Beef Chen, Dumpling Teng. . . Tailor Huang. . . ."46

When her daughter was born, Liu started a diary using her daughter's voice to keep a record of her childhood. The diary gives intimate details of their family life, her daughter's baby-sitter, their neighbours, friends, and folk culture: "Dad and Mom used a towel to cover my arms which I love to wave and dance. They say, I am playing a puppet drama (pu-tai-hsi). . . ."47

Unlike Chu Hsi-ning who was an immigrant, Liu could provide an understanding of the situation in Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule, and what happened when the KMT arrived in Taiwan. She gave an alternative window for her daughter's perception of Taiwanese culture and history. For instance, Chu Hsi-ning, as a mainlander, thought that the period of Japanese colonial rule was a shameful period of separation from the "mother culture," and urged the Taiwan literary world to "recover" Chinese culture in Taiwan. Liu, on the other hand, implicitly served as a voice for a positive view of Japanese/Taiwanese aesthetics.

Liu is still one of the most eminent translators from the Japanese in Taiwan. Her translations, remarkable in both quality and quantity, included works by such well-known writers as Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927), Dazai Osamu (1909-1948), Mishima Yukio (1925-1970), Abe Kobo (1923-1993), and Miyamoto Teru (1947-). Some of these Japanese writers, such as Mishima Yukio are known for their refined aesthetics appeal and their national pride. Reading these writers' works in Liu's translation may well have developed Chu's aesthetic sensitivity, for she went on to continue studying Japanese at college.

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46. Liu Mu-sha, "Ma-ta ch'u-fang chi" (Ma-ta's Memoir on Kitchen) in *Chung-ku san-nien* (Three Years of Progress), *San-san chi-k'an* (Three-Three Magazine), no. 25, 1980, p. 159.

47. Chu T'ien-wen, "Shan-hua hung" (Mountain Red Flower), *HPTKS*, p. 50.

Liu's expertise in Japanese literature influenced her daughter immensely, not only did they visit Japan almost every year to their great pleasure, but she also helped Chu T'ien-wen with translation of Japanese films.<sup>48</sup> Chu's film scripts such as *City of Sadness* (Pei-ch'ing ch'eng-shih, 1989), and her recent work *Splendour of the End of the Century* and *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* demonstrate considerable influence of Japanese aesthetics and modernity. We may safely say that without her mother, Chu would have found it more difficult to become so deeply involved with the New Cinema and to come to terms with the Nativist movement.

### 1.11 Master of Style: Chang Ai-ling

While we can identify Chu's mother's influence on Chu's work through the use of autobiographical material, it is difficult to say exactly how, or even whether, her knowledge of Japanese literature influenced Chu in writing fiction in Chinese. In fact, Chang Ai-ling was the major stylistic influence on Chu T'ien-wen, her influence beginning at the very start of her career. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Chang Ai-ling has been treated by some critics as a decadent writer. In order to provide a base for discussing this view in the concluding chapter, I will set out here a discussion of her writing style and her approach to fiction.

Chang Ai-ling first came to prominence in Shanghai in the period of occupation by the Japanese during the war of 1937-1945. She had come from a high ranking mandarin family; her maternal great grandfather Li Hung-chang and her grandfather Chang P'ei-lun were prominent in diplomacy during the late

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<sup>48</sup>. See Chu T'ien-wen, *LLFC*, p. 44.

Ch'ing period, and members of the last generation of imperial bureaucrats. She studied at Hong Kong University, and a year after she returned to Shanghai in 1942, she started to publish her fiction. In 1944, she married Hu Lan-ch'eng, a man fifteen years older than herself. They met after Hu had written an appreciative critique of her work in 1943. However, Chang Ai-ling divorced him after three years of marriage because of his affairs with other women.

In 1952, three years after the Communists took over Shanghai, Chang Ai-ling left for Hong Kong, and by 1955 was living in the United States. She kept publishing in Hong Kong and United States; and by 1968, her writing was highly appreciated in Taiwan. She became so popular and so influential among young Taiwanese writers that a collection of her short stories *Romances* (Ch'uan-ch'i, 1944) which portrayed unrequited love, was reprinted 43 times between 1968 and 1990 in Taiwan alone.

Chang had a sophisticated skill in illustrating the course of complicated love affairs, broken marriages and a sense of the decay of the old extended family. In her fiction she described with great skill the background of household routine, cooking a meal, making the beds, and so on to create the atmosphere she required. Her stories centre around two thematic areas -- the domination of women by men in love and marriage, and men's feeble equivocation about their selfishness. The men in her stories tend to be portrayed as selfish characters who are betrayed by their own weakness rather than as vicious beasts. The male protagonist in "Red Rose and White Rose" (Hung mei-kui yü pai mei-kui)<sup>49</sup> abandons his lover for a woman whom he thinks would make a more suitable partner in marriage. But he finds his new wife dutiful and obedient to the extent

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<sup>49</sup>. Chang Ai-ling, "Hung mei-kui yü pai mei-kui" (Red Rose and White Rose) in *Chang Ai-ling hsiao-shuo chi* (The Collection of Chang Ai-ling's Fiction) (Taipei: Huang-kuan, 1990 [1968] ), pp. 57-108.

of being boring. By chance, he meets his previous lover who is still beautiful, but is now happily married. The story ends with the obedient wife driven to adultery and mental breakdown, and the man struggling to understand what he has done. We can see that Chang takes a realistic view of some aspects of Chinese society especially of the inferior status it affords to women.

Chang described herself as materialistic, and said that "the pain and pleasure of her financial constraint was that of the bourgeois."<sup>50</sup> Her stories are about bourgeois characters who carefully plan to secure emotional and financial security through marriage. In portraying the delicate courtship rituals of the middle classes, Chang also brings out the irony, and sometimes tragedy, of the situation of those who attempt to climb the social ladder. For instance, "Agalloch Eaglewood Bits: The First Stove of Incense" (Ch'en-hsiang hsieh: ti-yi lu hsiang) describes a Shanghai woman who lives with a relative in Hong Kong, her search for financial security leads her to enter into an unfortunate marriage with a playboy.

Her most celebrated work, "Love in a Fallen City" (Ch'ing-ch'eng chih-lien) is the story of a young widow who escapes from the ill-treatment she suffers from her husband's family by going to Hong Kong to try to start a new life. But as Yingjin Zhang points out, "men and women cannot really enjoy themselves in the city," even as a woman enjoys the gambling, dancing and café life which is available, she is "still thinking about the matter of

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50. Chen Ch'ing-sheng, "K'ang-chan shih-ch'i te shanghai wen-hsüeh" (Shanghai Literature During the War with Japanese) (Shanghai: Jen-min chu-pan she, 1995), p. 230.

marriage."<sup>51</sup> And so, in the hope of marriage, the young widow contracts a liaison with a dandy.

On the occasions when Chang's characters abandon conventional morality, it is shown to be due to the distortion of true feeling by materialistic influences. For example, "Glass Tile" (Liu-li wa) shows materialistic, socially ambitious parents using their daughters to curry favour with people of influence and power. Chang's stories above all reflect a world in which humanity is distorted by greed, and in which the possibility of love has been destroyed by the desire for money.<sup>52</sup> In Chang's fiction, money and material possessions have an irresistible, magnetic power to influence thinking and to change peoples' lives.

Like the aestheticist writers of the 1930s, Chang did not foresee the infection of alienation and decadence which would come increasingly to dominate the modern materialistic society; for her, material possessions in and for themselves possessed a magical attraction which could distort all logical reasoning.

It may be noted that Chang thought that, "during her lifetime, the world had a greater capacity for self-destruction,"<sup>53</sup> this fatalistic sense of impending

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51. See Yingjin Zhang, *The City in Modern Chinese Literature and Film: Configurations of Space, Time, and Gender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 245.

52. For Chang's stories discussed above, see *Chang Ai-ling hsiao-shuo chi*.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-6. In her fiction, Chang shows a healthy distrust of idealisation and has a generally sceptical outlook. Bearing in mind her experience in being married to Hu Lan-ch'eng, and the times in which she lived, this is not surprising, indeed it contributes greatly to the verisimilitude of her writing. She did not believe in popular panaceas put forward to solve the plight of modern mankind, such as the return to a primitive society. As she says, "Modern man cannot return to a primitive society, no matter how much he may want to. . . He thinks that when he is weary of the world he can

doom intensified her appreciation of ordinary life and everyday things, such as food and clothes: "I remember how we used to search for ice cream and lip stick on the street stalls after the invasion of Hong Kong."<sup>54</sup>

As Edward Gunn points out, her pessimism and scepticism did not stop her taking "a delight in what can be immediately sensed, and striving to put intelligent or rational consideration before emotional affirmation, which could result in sceptical witticisms."<sup>55</sup> As Chang wrote: "My work contains no war, no revolution. I think that when people are in love their feelings are more evident and unfettered than in times of war or revolution. But a true war or revolution should be like falling in love. . . reaching freely for the emotional apex of life, in harmony with oneself."<sup>56</sup>

The appeal of her disillusioning, powerful love stories is enhanced by exquisite descriptive passages which mark her out as an original artist. She treated words as jewel-like objects which have a value in their own right not only as the bricks in a larger construction of meaning. She regarded that the power of words comes from their inherent richness of meaning and sensual qualities, so that the writer can use words as a material which has texture and chromatic values akin to the paints of an artist. She praised classical writers who were able to burnish their words to produce an imagery which would dazzle the reader.<sup>57</sup>

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find respite in a primitive society. . . but in reality. . . he can only find a false relief in such foolishness." Chang Ai-ling, *Liu-yen* (Words Written on the Water) (Taipei: Huang-kuan, 1995 [1968]), p. 184.

<sup>54</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>55</sup>. Edward M. Gunn, *Unwelcome Muse: Chinese Literature in Shanghai and Peking 1937-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 202.

<sup>56</sup>. Chang Ai-ling, *Liu-yen*, p. 20.

<sup>57</sup>. For her discussion on colour and language, see Chang Ai-ling, *Liu-yen*, pp. 143-149, and *Chang k'an* (Chang's View) (Taipei: Huang-kuan, 1988 [1968]), p. 178.

She realised that "Chinese words have a visual impact, and that the appearance of the word itself evokes meaning."<sup>58</sup>

As regards to the stylistic source of Chang's language, we may say that Chang's style has features of the "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School," a combination of modern colloquial (pai-hua) and the traditional Chinese language. Modern Chinese language had already become well established by the 1930s through the works of writers such as Lao She and Ts'ao Yü, but their language was not as beautiful and alluring as the language used by Chang with its mixture of modern and traditional sources, and use of symbols and metaphor. Chang's dazzling language places her on a higher stylistic plane than her contemporaries.

The works which Chang produced in the 1950s, *The Rice-Sprout Song* (Yang-ke, 1955) and *Naked Earth* (Ch'ih-ti chih-lien, 1956), based on her short period of experience of life under the Communist regime showed for the first time a strongly anti-Communist attitude. Chu Hsi-ning, with his staunch anti-Communism, gave *The Rice-Sprout Song* and *Naked Earth* particular praise. The young Chu T'ien-wen echoed her father's view of these novels when she wrote two essays on *Naked Earth*. Like her father, Chu T'ien-wen tended not to discuss current social issues in her work but to write about longer term issues, at this time, anti-Communism. In her writings, the political argument is transformed into a moral argument, and eventually becoming a desire for a humanistic world, as she said:

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<sup>58</sup>. Chang Ai-ling, *Chang k'an*, p.178. Here she is referring to her view that each Chinese character has a conceptual rather than a specific meaning, and that its individual constituent parts have further conceptual references, so that merely to look at a character on the printed page will arouse a host of associations in way which is simply not possible with Western writing.



I have just finished reading the *Naked Earth*. I feel no hatred for the Communists, but feel sorrowful, extremely sorrowful. The sorrow changes into a clear bright pain, and the teardrops are transparent crystal.

I disapprove of Communism. There are trillions of reasons to be anti-Communist, but mine is a very simple one, it is just because of *Naked Earth*. . . .<sup>59</sup>

We do not have to take the final sentence too literally because Chu T'ien-wen seems often to have used this form as a way of stressing her strength of feeling, or as a compliment.

In the turbulent times of the story, *Naked Earth* describes the love between a pair of patriotic students. The male character first succeeds in escaping from Communist China, and then later decides to return. At the end of the story, his motives for returning are left ambiguous -- we do not know whether it is his love for the woman or his love for his country which led to his decision to return. Chu T'ien-wen was deeply moved by this novel, and went on to use this kind of patriotic and romantic love relationship as a theme in her early works. Chu believed that Chang Ai-ling's descriptions of such a pure and innocent love showed that she had "the sentiments of a *shih*."<sup>60</sup> But, Chang herself was not idealistic enough to consider herself to be a *shih*. It is more likely that this work was written by Chang as an attempt to show the pain caused by the political division of China, which was not just geographic, but also affected families split up by opinions and events.

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<sup>59</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, "Wu-t'i" (Unnamed Title), *TC*, p. 117.

<sup>60</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, "T'an *Ch'ih-ti chih-lien*" (On *Naked Earth*), *TC*, p. 120.

The main influence that Chang Ai-ling had on Chu T'ien-wen was in the use of language and the expression of sentiment, not political opinions, because Chu was already firmly anti-Communist. Chang Ai-ling's early collection of essays *Words Written on the Water* (Liu-yen, 1950) was not published in Taiwan until 1970. She wrote on topics ranging from clothes to the Chinese opera, depicting the liveliness of a young girl's view of her daily life, as C. T. Hsia comments "the young Chang Ai-ling expressed her curiosity, and interest in a wide range of subjects."<sup>61</sup>

The young Chu T'ien-wen was a fan of Chang Ai-ling's essays and was inspired by Chang's lively, witty and penetrating comments on women's role in Chinese society and women's perceptions of love, which stimulated her in her own observations of daily life and relationships. In short, Chang Ai-ling's views on literature were crucial in stimulating Chu's imagination, and helping the development of the young writer's creativity in story telling and use of language.

### 1.12 The *Shih's* Duty: Hu Lan-ch'eng

Although Chu T'ien-wen is a great admirer of Chang Ai-ling and her work, her respect for Hu Lan-ch'eng is even greater. Through Hu's writings and personal instruction, Chu T'ien-wen absorbed a philosophical credo based on Chinese traditional thinking which was the easier to accept because it supported the thinking of Chu Hsi-ning and the KMT regime.

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<sup>61</sup>. Quoted from Huang Pi-tuan, "Chang Ai-ling te leng-yan yü je-ch'ing (The Cool Eyes and Passionate Heart of Chang Ai-ling), *Lien-ho wen-hsüeh* (Unitas), no. 12 (Oct. 1995): 17.

Hu Lan-ch'eng, the gifted child of a poor family was born in Hang-chou, Che-chiang in 1906. He received a traditional education in his village school and at Huiling High School. At the age of twenty-one, he worked as a secretary for the Deputy President at Yen-ching University where he also sat in on some literature and history classes.

After teaching at schools in Hang-chou for five years, Hu first came to prominence when he started work for Wang Ching-wei in 1937 as Editor-in-chief of the *China Daily* (Chung-hua jih-pao), the official organ of Wang's "Peace Movement."<sup>62</sup> Wang, who was one of the leaders of the KMT and rival to Chiang Kai-shek, headed the puppet regime in Nanking in 1940.

When the war ended in 1945, Wang and his clique were accused of treason by both Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists and the Communists. Hu Lan-ch'eng fled, first to the countryside to escape arrest by the Nationalists, and, then in 1949 after the Communist takeover, to exile in Japan. After more than twenty years in Japan, he began an extended visit to Taiwan in the mid-1970s. At this time, he wrote extensively on Sun Yat-sen's "Three Principles of the People."<sup>63</sup> However, his best known works are his autobiography *This Life and This World* (Chin-sheng chin-shih), which describes his romantic liaisons and his political life; and *Landscape and Time* (Shan-ho sui-yüeh), which covers those

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62. For Hu Lan-ch'eng's brief biography, see Yü Ch'ing, "Chang Ai-ling te luan-shih yin-yüan" (Chang Ai-ling's Marriage in a Time of Turmoil), in Yü Ping, *Chang Ai-ling chuan* (The Biography of Chang Ai-ling) (Peking: Hai-nan Ch'u-pan-she/Hai-nan kuo-chi hsin-wen ch'u-pan chung-hsin), pp. 367-372.

63. See, for instance, Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Chien-kuo hsin-shu* (New Ideas for Building the Nation) (Taipei: San-san/Yüan-liu, 1991).

major religious, political and social issues he considered important to world civilisation, and that he somewhat ambitiously thought that he could explain.<sup>64</sup>

Reading Hu's work today, it becomes clear why some critics would consider him to be hypocritical and ruthless.<sup>65</sup> As can be seen from his essay "Women of the Republic" (Min-kuo nü-tzu), the language he used to describe, or rather to romanticise his womanising, was more appropriate for an aesthetic appreciation than for a justification of his many relationships with women: "Ai-ling and I are just fond of each other, like the word fondness (huan) in the poem *Midnight Song* (Tzu-yeh ke), which is better than being lovers. . . , and also even if I have many female friends. . . she is not jealous. She would rather that all the women in the world love me."<sup>66</sup> The truth of this may be judged by the fact that Chang Ai-ling returned to him unopened the complimentary copy of the book that he sent her.<sup>67</sup> His revelations about his relations with women and about his association with Shanghai triad gangsters during the war, although written in a decorative style, offended some of his readers.

Although Hu was regarded as a traitor to the nation by the KMT regime and by most of the elite in Taiwan, the Chu family nevertheless paid him a visit and found him congenial and charming, someone with whom they could have an interesting conversation. It may be that as a Christian, Chu Hsi-ning was sympathetic to Hu's situation, but it is more likely that their common interest in Chang Ai-ling and Confucianism was the main reason why Hu and Chu Hsi-ning

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<sup>64</sup>. Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Shan-ho sui-yüeh* (Landscape and Time) (Taipei: San-san, 1990)

<sup>65</sup>. See Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 78.

<sup>66</sup>. Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Chin-sheng chin-shih* (This Life and This World) (Taipei: San-san, 1990), p. 287.

<sup>67</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 45.

found each other congenial. Hu's erudition and elegant writing certainly cast a spell on the Chu sisters.

Hu can be regarded as one of the traditional *literati*; taking pleasure in skill with the brush in calligraphy and painting; cultivating his taste through conversation; and viewing cultural relics and interesting topography. Huang Chin-shu argues that "Hu's theory is in fact like literature which has been reconstructed: knowledge to him is merely the material for aesthetics."<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Hu once deeply involved in politics, still loved political discussion. He would agree with Ouyang Hsiu, a scholar of the Sung dynasty, who said: "Literature is a means of self-cultivation, politics achieves concrete aims."<sup>69</sup> Hu's views on one's political engagement are similar to those of the Sung scholar Chu Hsi, focusing on the concept of "the investigation of things, and the extension of knowledge" (*ke-wu chih-chih*); through the process of learning, one seeks to manage the family, govern the state and pacify the world (*ch'i-jia, chih-kuo, p'ing-t'ien-hsia*).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>. See Huang Chin-shu, "Shen-chi chih wu" in *HYCS*, p. 268. Most scholars treat Hu's thoughts as something intuitive and non-logical. The fact is that Hu, who had not had the benefit of a rigorous education at university, and who had always worked as a journalist/propagandist was always more concerned with persuasion than with proof. But this lack of academic respectability would not deter the Chus since they already agreed with his basic ideas and would find his idealistic socio-political theorising just the sort of thinking they would be inclined to accept as being in line with their own beliefs.

<sup>69</sup>. Ch'ien Mu, *Sung Ming li-hsüeh kai-lun* (The Introduction of Sung-Ming Neo-Confucianism) (Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chün, 1996), p. 11.

<sup>70</sup>. Hu Lan-ch'eng discussed the idea of "Huang-Lao chih-shu" (The Way of Emperor Huang and Lao-Tzu), which, according to Chao Chi-hui, was a strategy focusing on the skills for managing state affairs. Compared to Lao Tzu's own pessimism, "Huang-Lao chih-shu" was optimistic and active, if somewhat machiavellian.

See Hu Lan-ch'eng, "Huang-Lao p'ien" (Section on Huang-Lao) in *Ke-ming yao-shih yü hsüeh-wen* (The Principles of Revolution and Knowledge) (Taipei: San-san shu-

Hu emphasised the *shih's* duty to society, and promoted the idea of an hierarchical society in which the *shih* assists the ruler and leads the commoners -- an attempt to use an idealised feudal relationship as a part of an harmonious system in a modern industrial society.

During his years in Japan Hu read widely in mythology, the sciences and mathematics. He was especially influenced by two of his Japanese friends: the mathematician, Oka Kiyoshi<sup>71</sup> and Nobel prize winning physicist, Yukawa Hideki.<sup>72</sup> Hu then wrote "The Five Basic Principles of Nature" (Ta tzu-jan wu ta chi-pen fa-tse) in which he conflated an elaborate mixture of ideas from literature and science so as to promote his own political philosophy.

His belief in a priori reasoning is illustrated by the maxims he passed on to Chu T'ien-wen: "the sage has nothing he does not know" and that "knowing and debating" are the essence of intellectual pleasure.<sup>73</sup> He did however, introduce the Three-Three group to a book on modern physics and mathematics, saying that reading the book would help them "gain confidence in themselves, since they will understand the correspondence of musical notes or colours with the underlying scientific basis."<sup>74</sup> Chu T'ien-wen has never, since then, changed her feelings about what the aims of literature should be, the traditional role of the literary man as a *shih* has been part of her thinking since the beginning of her literary career.

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fang, 1991). pp. 163-182; Chao Chi-hui, *Chung-kuo wen-hua tao-lun* (The Introduction of Chinese Culture) (Taipei: Wen shih che ch'u-pan-she, 1994), pp. 124-125.

<sup>71</sup>. Oka (1901-), born in Wakayama Prefecture, was the first mathematician to receive the Asahi Cultural Prize for his study of the theory of multivariant functions in 1954. *Japan Biographical Encyclopaedia and Who's Who*, Japan Biographical Research Department of the Rengo Press, ed. (Tokyo: Rengo Press, 1962), p. 1142.

<sup>72</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 1957-1948.

<sup>73</sup>. See Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Ch'ien-kuo hsin-shu*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>74</sup>. Quoted in Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 98.

However, the two features of Hu's view of the world and Chinese culture which influenced Chu particularly were not based on science as we know it, but on a priori reasoning.

Firstly, Hu believed in the superiority of the Chinese form of civilisation and culture, romanticising it as something that would never perish. With a slight lack of rigour in his logic, he asserted that there could only be one form of civilisation, with no difference between "East and West." Believing, as he did, in the underlying unity of all forms of human civilisation, he thought that a change of dynasty by revolution, civil war or foreign invasion, was merely "the destruction of a regime (wang-kuo), but not the end of the world (wang-t'ien-hsia)."<sup>75</sup> It is noteworthy that in following his line of thought, he did not give much consideration to the cost in human life, the grief and brutality of these various disasters. Had he done so he might well have said, in the English idiom, "You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs." Be that as it may, Chu accepted this line of thought, indeed she often claimed to owe much to Hu Lan-ch'eng's thinking. This would account for the strong Utopian element in her thinking, backed up as it was by the traditional concept of "harmony between Heaven and Men" (t'ien-jen ho-yi).

Secondly, Hu insisted on an aesthetic appreciation of folk culture, seeing it as the connecting link between all the different levels of people. In fact, Hu romanticised the peasants, whereas Chu Hsi-ning, who had actual experience of country life, expresses a very different view. In his stories like "Molten Iron," "Wolf" (Lang, 1963) and "The Men Who Smelt Gold" (Yeh-chin-che, 1969), he illustrates the greed, dishonesty, and inflexibility of the peasants. Hu, however, placed a high artistic and cultural value on folk art, drama, and song, and regarded folk art as the origin of all art. Hu's high valuation of folk culture does

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<sup>75</sup>. Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Shan-ho sui-yüeh*, p. 27.

not appear to sit easily with his advocacy of a *shih* governed society. He seems to have felt that the promotion of folk art would enable the *shih* better to keep the masses contented in their position in society.

Additionally, he regarded such things as ancient religion, ancestor worship, clan organisation, triad secret societies and *yin-yang* theory as high forms of civilisation.<sup>76</sup> In line with his views on the self-regulation of life on Earth, the fall of a dynasty is by definition regarded as positive, he used the concept of the "people's uprising" (*min-ch'ien chi-ping*) -- with the intention of overthrowing a regime -- as a case of the people acting with a common goal to improve the government.

The latter formulation of the rationale of the Mandate of Heaven concept was taken by Chu T'ien-wen as a basic truth. As we shall see in the next chapter, in her book *Notes on Tamkang*, she writes with great conviction about the idea she derived from Hu of the Han dynasty as the epitome of the feudal, structured state. Hu also encouraged Chu to adopt a more mature approach to both the style and content of her fiction. Hu suggested that when one is seventeen one can write teenage romances; but as one matures one has to deal with more mature themes.<sup>77</sup>

Hu died in 1981, and in 1982 Chu published her second collection of essays and short stories, *Legend* (*Ch'uan-shuo*), in which she paid Hu the compliment of saying that her work had been written with one person in mind, and that person was Hu Lan-ch'eng. As recently as 1997, in speaking about her recent novel, *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, Chu said that she had written it

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<sup>76</sup>. Such ideas can be generally found in Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Chin-jih ho-jih hsi* (What Day is Today) (Taipei: San-san shu-fang, 1990), particularly in pp. 97, 103.

<sup>77</sup>. See Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh shih-hua* (Some Views on Chinese Literature) (Taipei: San-san shu-fang, 1980), pp. 146-147.



in order to fulfil her promise to Hu, thus illustrating the extent of her commitment to Hu and his teaching.

### 1.13 Summary

Chu was fortunate, both materially, in being brought up in a privileged, upper class family, and intellectually, in being raised in a stimulating and demanding environment. We can summarise the contributions made by these four people to Chu T'ien-wen's writing as follows:

Her father, Chu Hsi-ning instilled her basic anti-Communism, and her desire for the return to the mainland. He did not contribute to her education in the reality of Taiwanese politics, because he did not consider local politics relevant to the family's or the regime's future.

In her early work, her father's influence was paramount, but as she became involved with film, and worked with people of different political views, her mother's influence and the experience gained from her visits to her mother's family as a child became more apparent, as we shall see in Chapter III below.

Chang Ai-ling influenced her greatly in her use of language, and impressed her greatly with her view on women's place in society. Hu Lan-ch'eng strongly affected her with his views on the philosophy of government, the structure of the state, and, particularly, the social responsibility of the *shih*. The influence of Hu's thought predominates in her early work, but by the time of *Splendour of the End of the Century*, the influence of Chang Ai-ling is more evident. In her recent novel, *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, these two influences, merging with Nativism, combine together to produce a novel of great originality.

## Chapter II

### A Conformist Start: Chu T'ien-wen's Early Works

Chu T'ien-wen's literary beginnings were not auspicious. The few politely encouraging reviews, and a literary prize that greeted her first endeavour, *Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao* (Ch'iao-t'ai-shou hsing-chi, 1977) did not encourage wide, critical readership of the work. Chu T'ien-wen herself has agreed with the critical consensus that *Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao* was aesthetically inferior to her later works, and also to those of her contemporaries, such as Chiang Hsiao-yün.<sup>1</sup> The naive, idealistic faith in KMT ideology that stamped her first work of creative literature with an evangelical tone probably contributed to the lukewarm attitude of the reviewers.

During this apprenticeship period, the style and content of Chu T'ien-wen's writing were very similar to those of the other members of the Three-Three group, such as Hsien Chih or Ting Ya-min. They all wrote unsophisticated, girlish romantic stories, and long essays praising the classics and KMT ideology. Even though the group had serious political ideas, their public image

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<sup>1</sup>. For Chu T'ien-wen's own comments on her work and the woman writer Chiang Hsiao-yün, one of the members of the Three-Three Society, see "Hua-yi ch'ien-shen" (A Flower Remembers Her Previous Lives), *HYCS*, p. 49.

Chu T'ien-wen's *Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao* was a volume of high school/college girl's romances, and the author herself said many years later that, compared with her peers who were active in the Nativist movement, her first book was like "A singing girl who does not understand the sorrow of ruined kingdoms" (Shang-nü pu chih wang-kuo hen). See Chu T'ien-wen, "Wo te ti-yi pen shu" (My First Book), *Lien-ho wen-hsüeh* (Unitas), no. 144, Oct. (1996):16.

was intimately associated with popular literature. The Three-Three Magazine was published by one of the largest publishing houses--Huang-kuan (The Crown); their readership was mainly young female high school and college students. In fact, among the group's members, Chu's sister Chu T'ien-hsin is the one whose early stories gained a deserved immense popular success, while Chu T'ien-wen's works were comparatively unsuccessful.

As a general indication of the sunny optimism of their stories we need look no further than the titles of stories by members of the society with their many references to "good weather," for instance, Hsien Chih's *For Whom is the Good Weather Named* (Hao-t'ien-ch'i kei shei t'i-ming),<sup>2</sup> or Lu Fei-yi's *The Boy of the Sun* (Jih-kuang nan-hai ).<sup>3</sup> Critic Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang went so far as to say that the romantic sentimentality of the Three-Three group produced nothing but "middlebrow kitsch."<sup>4</sup> A view, which on the surface, has much to commend it, however, I hope that my discussion of Chu's wider thinking at the time she was writing such stories, will demonstrate that the philosophical potential for her later writing was already in place. To those who read Chu's romantic love stories without any idea of the intellectual base of her work, her latest work with its treatment of explicitly homosexual desire will be completely unexpected. Thus, the interest of the formation of the Three-Three Society lies not in its relevance to her writing at that time, but as a foundation for her later work.

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2. Hsien Chih, *Hou-t'ien-ch'i kei shei t'i-ming* (For Whom is the Good Weather Named) (Taipei: San-san, 1987).

3. Lu Fei-yi, *Jih-kuang nan-hai* (The Boy of the Sun) (Taipei: San-san, 1984).

4. Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, "Chu T'ien-wen and Taiwan's Recent Cultural and Literary Trends," 1992, p. 64.

## 2.1 The Founding of the Three-Three Society

As mentioned in Chapter I, in 1974 Chu began her study at Tamkang University. College was a happy time for Chu. She had a busy life there, and had a circle of friends who shared her love for literature and the arts. Her friends' recollections describe her as refined in appearance and behaviour, she dressed well, wore her hair long, and was moderately outspoken.<sup>5</sup>

In 1977, she and her close-knit group of friends founded the society and its associated literary journal, the *Three-Three Magazine* (San-san chi-k'an).<sup>6</sup> Chu was inspired by the philosophical views of Hu Lan-ch'eng and together with Chu Hsi-ning, he provided the encouragement to set up the society. Although its activities were centred on the Chu family home in Ching-mei, the magazine and group activities were open to all young people throughout Taiwan. Many aspiring writers were attracted to join, and the scope of its activities and breadth of membership made it more than a college society.

She claimed later that she was totally absorbed in her Three-Three circle, giving little thought to current political and social issues. There was probably a large element of self-justification in her claim, since she had made many negative

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5. These memoirs written by her friends can be found in the "Preface" of the following books by Chu T'ien-wen: Lin Hui-o [Hsian-chih] in *CTSHC*, Ting Ya-min in *TC* and Yüan Ch'ung-Ch'ung in *THNTCH*.

6. The core members of Three-Three Society were selected from Chu T'ien-wen's Tamkang associates or Chu T'ien-hsin's friends from Taiwan University: Ma Shu-li, the chairman of the Literature Society (Wen-she) in Tamkang College, of which Chu T'ien-wen was a member; Ting Ya-min and Lu Fei-yi, students of Architecture in Tamkang; Hsien Chih, Chu T'ien-wen's closest female friend, studied at Chinese Culture University and assisted Hu Lan-ch'eng in transcribing his articles; Lin Tuan, a law student in Taiwan University; and Hsieh Ts'ai-chün, a history student in Taiwan University, who later became Chu T'ien-hsin's husband.

references to Nativism in the essays and stories in *Notes on Tamkang* (Tamkang Chi, 1979) and *Legend* (Ch'uan-shuo, 1981). She was also accused by critics of an overly mainland way of thinking.<sup>7</sup> Be that as it may, the event which brought Chu into close contact with real life was the breaking of diplomatic ties by the United States in 1978. In view of the length and extent of previous American commitment to the KMT regime, the new American accord with mainland China was seen by people in Taiwan as a shocking betrayal. Since Chu regarded her fate as indissolubly linked to that of the nation, she reacted strongly to the diplomatic isolation of Taiwan. The Three-Three Society belief in National Salvation is reminiscent of the student patriotism of the May Fourth movement. Somewhat like the May Fourth students, Chu T'ien-wen and the Three-Three group joined in activities designed to urge the nation to unite and follow a single political doctrine. Chu expressed her feelings in a newspaper: "The young intellectuals should turn their anger and sadness into strength for uniting the whole nation, and for mobilising the masses with Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People (San-min chu-yi: nationalism, democracy and livelihood)."<sup>8</sup>

By her own account, Chu T'ien-wen's initial encounter with Sun Yat-sen's thought had been a revelation: twenty-one years old, encouraged by her father Chu Hsi-ning and Hu Lan-ch'eng's writing on Sun's politics during the early Republican era in China, she enthusiastically embraced Sun's humanistic social vision. In fact, while the Three-Three Society was being formed, Sun's "Three Principles" were very much in the members' minds.

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7. Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, "Chu T'ien-wen and Taiwan's Recent Cultural and Literary Trends," 1992, p. 64.

8. See under "Chu T'ien-wen" in "Mai-hsiang ting-feng ni-lang te cheng-ch'eng" (A March Along a Road of Stormies), *Lien-ho pao* (United Daily), Dec. 17, 1978.

## 2. 2. The Basic Ideas of the Three-Three Society

The founding members had considered various other names that could encapsulate the aims and objectives of the group. The original suggestion was "Chiang-ho," an abbreviation of the names of the two largest rivers in China: Yangtze River (Ch'ang-chiang) and the Yellow River (Huang-ho). Since the two rivers are regarded as the cradle of Chinese civilisation, symbolic of the origin and strength of the culture, the name "Chiang-ho" clearly shows that the group identified with mainland China.

However, the name finally chosen was simply "Three-Three." This choice was intended to suggest an even more profound meaning, namely to cover various aspects of moral teaching: the three major Chinese poetic forms (Fu, Pi, Hsing); the three moral virtues -- wisdom, benevolence and courage. Influenced by the Chu family's religious belief, the name "Three-Three" also could be read as alluding to the Christian Trinity.

The name has another more romantic connotation, actually suggested by Hu Lan-ch'eng who had lived in Japan. It can refer to the Third of March, a Japanese festival celebrating the attainment of maturity by young women,<sup>9</sup> which would have interested the Chu sisters, who were intrigued by the sense of innocence and beauty evoked by the conventional image of Japanese women.

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9. These suggested meanings of Three-Three can be found on the inside cover of Chu T'ien-wen's *Tamkang chi* (Notes on Tamkang) (Taipei: San-san, 1986, 20th edn. 1979). March the Third is a festival dedicated to love and courtship celebrated by many Chinese minorities (although Chu may not have known this).

The group set themselves the serious idealistic task of advocating Sun Yat-sen's thought.<sup>10</sup> Their belief in the potential power of Chinese civilisation and culture led them to follow the path he advocated, which could eventually lead to the ancient Chinese utopia of a world in harmony (shih-chieh ta-t'ung). Their desire to promote Sun Yat-sen's ideas led the Three-Three group vigorously to oppose any movement protesting against the KMT government, and determined their opposition to the modern democratic system. This attitude is exemplified by Ma Shu-li, one of the core members of Three-Three group:

Politics should not allow the people to decide, but should regard the people as its root. It is like art, which should appeal to the people but the content should not be decided by the people. Education should not ignore the response of the student, but what is taught should not be decided by them. Politics requires special knowledge; if decisions were to be taken by the people, the standard of politics would become low. This is not a matter of respecting people or not; to take the people as the root is to respect the people, but letting the people be masters of the system does not necessarily mean respecting the people.<sup>11</sup>

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10. Sun Yat-sen claims: "In China, there is an orthodoxy of the teachings of the Emperors Yao, Shun, Yü, and T'ang, the Kings Wen and Wu, Duke Chou, and Confucius -- an endless succession. My thought is based on this orthodoxy." Quoted from Fung Hu-hsiang, "On the Relationship Between Chinese Philosophy and Sun Yat-senism," in *Ideology and Politics in Twentieth Century China*, ed. King-yuh Chang (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, 1988), p. 22.

11. Ma Shu-li, *Huo-ch'e ch'eng che t'ien-ya lai* (The Train Coming from the Distant Sky) (Taipei: Ta-ti ch'u-pan-she, 1985), p. 86.

Such so called "people-rooted" (min-pen cheng-chih), but in reality oligarchic political thinking was in total contrast to the Nativists' democratic approach, in which people would have the right freely to form political parties as well as to have the vote. Chu T'ien-wen wanted to serve the people, but for her, the meaning of "serving" was not based on the Nativist's "people-as-master" democracy (which is the literal translation of min-chu cheng-chih), but rather took the meaning "lead the people."

In line with Ma, Chu T'ien-wen preferred her ideal model of the classical sage-king and "people-rooted" political system. At this stage, she thought that this political system would lead to everyone being "happy in love," and "couples being united in loving marriages."<sup>12</sup> Chu believed that within a "cold industrial modern world, in a plastic era," it was only through Confucian ideology (not through democracy) that people's emotional lives could be secure and morality improved. Such anti-democratic thinking inevitably led to her antagonism towards the Nativist movement.

Developing from this starting point, the Three-Three thinking emphasised the importance of education, or rather of education as they saw it. Chu's own account in *Notes at Tamkang* concentrates on the classical system of education and Sun Yat-sen's view that the foundation of successful revolution is depth of knowledge. The Three-Three group therefore stressed the importance of classical learning and moral cultivation, especially in their plans for the education of elite university students -- the feature distinguishing them from other student literary groups of the time.

Based on their own experiences at modern schools, "where teachers spend all their time and energy solely in pushing students to study for nation-

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<sup>12</sup>. "Ch'uan-shuo" (Legend), CS, p. 252.



wide examinations,"<sup>13</sup> they desired a return to the ancient academy system where these students could, at a self-determined pace, learn through individual tutorials. They argued that the current course of the development of modern education in science and technology was leading to the replacement of the traditional study of the humanities by purely practical education and the abandonment of the philosophical bases of science. They felt that this gradual discarding of the Confucian classics and traditional subjects would lead to an increasing loss of intellectual and moral fibre.

A major aim in establishing the Three-Three group was also to encourage members to pursue personal development in discussion and writing.<sup>14</sup> Chu T'ien-wen held that a scientific "Americanised" system was not a human-oriented education system. She asserted that the best way of benefiting from university life was to participate in extra-curricular activities, for example, folk dancing, theatre and the arts. She was displeased to see the traditional tutor/pupil relationship abandoned as school authorities asked the students to judge their teachers using scientific evaluation forms. Chu particularly disliked the modern academic focus on methodology, for she thought that: "To apply methodology to arts and humanities subjects will not benefit us in understanding literature and history."<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, she did not put forward any factual or rational justification of her views, all we can say is that she was confident enough in her belief to express the hope that some day there would be a "Three-Three University" in mainland China.<sup>16</sup>

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13. "San-san chu" (Notes on the Three-Three Society), in *Chung-ku san-nien* (Three Years of Progress), *San-san chi-k'an* (Three-Three Magazine), no. 25 (1980): 100.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

15. "Mu-yang-ch'iao tsai-chien" (Farewell, Shepherd Bridge), *TC*, p. 21.

16. In an essay Chu T'ien-wen painted a rosy picture of establishing a university, saying that: "We must establish a Three-Three University and the quality of the school

The Three-Three group's embracing of the elitist, traditional political and educational values was important in shaping Chu's identity as a fiction writer. When asked if she would like to be a "professional writer" (chih-yeh tso-chia), she wrote that:

The traditional Chinese scholar (tu-shu-jen) is not willing to be just a professional person. His province is the whole world, which is not something that can be divided into different categories of profession like Western artists.<sup>17</sup>

Here, her concept of a person of intellect and cultivation is of someone who is capable of applying him or herself to any problem or situation. The idea of writing as a task of everlasting value, and of the writer as *shih*<sup>18</sup> empowers Chu, and enables her to assert the importance of being a writer. Believing that the *shih* is the crucial element in governing society, Chu was opposed to the Western literary idea of "art for art's sake"<sup>19</sup> which advocates the importance of aesthetic values *per se* and denies the social function of art. To Chu T'ien-wen, true art could never be separated from everyday life. In an endeavour to distinguish between the Western concept of 'artist' and the ancient Chinese

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should be better than Peking University of the May Fourth era, it is meant to lead the young people of the whole nation to build up China." See Chu T'ien-wen's "Hsien-yüan ju hua" (Immortal Fate like Flower), *TC*, p. 134.

17. "Tao-hua tan-shui shen ch'ien-chih" (Peach Pond Water Thousand-Foot Deep), *TC*, p. 46.

18. "Hsien-yüan ju hua", *TC*, p. 139.

19. "K'an Chiang-shan mei-jen" (Seeing the film *A Beautiful Woman and the Landscape*), *TC*, p. 99.

concept of *shih*, she would emphasise that the writer should model him or herself on the latter and not just write for artistic pleasure.<sup>20</sup>

In this connection, the significance of the characterisation of the lecturer in the story "Recollections of a Butterfly" (Hu-tieh chi )<sup>21</sup> is indicated by the fact that it was used as the title of the first issue of the Three-Three Magazine. The protagonist, who only began to value his national culture while studying abroad, returned home to devote himself to teaching at university, symbolising Chu's ideal *shih*.

Among her characters in *Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao* she also created pseudo-intellectuals to contrast with this ideal model of the *shih*: the young high school boy who seeks to enjoy the social privilege of being an editor of the school magazine in "A Loving Couple,"<sup>22</sup> and the young university student in "Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao" who plagiarises poetry and mouths literary jargon without understanding.<sup>23</sup>

At this time, Chu T'ien-wen was classified as one of a group of women writers of romances. This group, together with the Nativist literature (hsiang-t'u wen-hsüeh) group dominated the Taiwan literary scene. The contrast between the early works of Chu T'ien-wen and the social fiction of the Nativists is very distinct. The latter concentrated on the issues of Taiwanese cultural identity and on social issues,<sup>24</sup> while Chu's stories concentrated on romance amongst young

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20. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

21. "Hu-tieh chi" (Recollections of a Butterfly), *CTSHC*, pp. 191-219.

22. "Li-jen hsing" (A Loving Couple), *CTSHC*, pp. 63-96.

23. "Ch'iao t'ai-shou hsin-chi" (Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao), *CTSHC*, pp. 141-167.

24. Radical intellectuals challenged the significance of Taiwanese literature, for instance, the native Taiwanese writers Ch'en Ying-chen attacked "westernisation" and called for a national style (Taiwan style). In the same way, another writer Wang T'o proposed that literature "must be connected to the soil and to the people from which it

people. However, the intense interest of the Three-Three writers in promoting classical Chinese philosophy and culture, distinguished their work from the other well-known romantic woman novelists of the time, such as San Mao, Ch'iong Yao or Hsüan Hsiao-fo.

It was in this frame of mind that she wrote her early works, which I will analyse so as to show the spectrum of Chu's thinking on various key aspects of her social ideals, including marriage, love and friendship, and the family. I shall end this chapter by discussing her romanticised concept of the *shih* as a person who is highly cultivated spiritually.

The stories in Chu's first book, some of which have been mentioned in Chapter I, provide many illustrations of Chu's Three-Three ideals. "Recollections of a Butterfly", for instance, was the first story in which she began to elaborate the theme of individual responsibility in education and the development of national culture. The essays in *Notes at Tamkang* (1979) express directly Chu T'ien-wen's view of the *shih* in Chinese society as a role model which, in turn, defined the intellectual direction and spiritual aspirations of the Three-Three group. The second collection of short stories, *Legend* (1982) continues the development of this notion in the Three-Three perception of an ideal society.

*Legend* includes ten short stories and the eponymous essay. The difference between *Legend* and the first volume of short stories is that *Legend* discussed political issues rather than being only a collection of love stories. It comprises five family, two romantic and three socio-political stories. These latter three stories represent Chu T'ien-wen's first effort to treat current politically controversial themes. The specific impetus for this change was the "Sing Our

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springs, and that it must concern society and contribute to its society reform." see under "Ch'en Ying-chen" and "Wang T'o" in *Modern Chinese Writers: Self-Portrayals*, ed. Helmut Martin and Jeffrey Kinkley (New York: M. E. Sharp, 1992), pp. 215, 229.

Own Song" movement initiated by Nativist intellectuals, which will be discussed shortly in the following section. Chu T'ien-wen strongly opposed to this movement and wrote these three short stories critical of the Nativist intellectuals for attempting to persuade the common people to resist the KMT government.

### 2.3 Social Activist Movements

During the 1970s, many writers and intellectuals of Nativist sympathies were leaving the "ivory tower" to join the newly formed opposition parties.<sup>25</sup> This was in defiance of the regime, which was trying to enforce restrictions on political activity. Unlike these intellectuals, Chu T'ien-wen's attitude mirrored that of the traditional *shih*, namely she disliked the incitement to civil unrest or outright disobedience. The demand for political reform, and the search for a new Taiwanese identity on the campus took the form of student protest activities. Of these, the most significant and influential was "Sing Our Own Songs" movement with students protesting against the prevalence of Western songs in the media, and instead writing their own songs that reflected Native Taiwanese cultural values.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>. During the late 1970s the KMT government rescinded the sedition law to allow the formation of *tang-wai* (literally "outside the Party"), an opposition group, which, however, did not yet have the legitimacy of a true political party. This came only in 1986 with the foundation of the *Min-chin-tang* or Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which remains the principal opposition party.

<sup>26</sup>. Some of the participants in this movement later became the core members of the DPP. The launch of "Sing Our Own Songs" started from Tamkang University, when Chu T'ien-wen was in her third year of college. The major singers and song writers were Li Shuang-tse and Yang Tsu-chün (who was one year senior to Chu T'ien-wen and later became an activist). For detail about the "Sing Our Own Songs" movement, see Yang

To Chu, writing or singing songs was only an expression of emotion with no rational intellectual base that society could rely on for guidance. She revealed her doubts in her comment on one of the initiators of the Nativist movement, folk singer, Li Shuang-tse. She wrote: "Shuang-tse's folk songs may be considered emotive (*hsing*), but does he know the *pi, fu* (importance of providing a sound intellectual foundation) for the success and failure of the era?"<sup>27</sup> Of course, Li Shuang-tse did not share Chu's views. His aim was rather to promote a campaign accessible to the common people and to raise their awareness of their national culture. From 1976 to 1979, the "Sing Our Own Song" movement grew in strength, and folk song concerts and music contests held by students became very popular on college campuses.<sup>28</sup> Many college students at that time made a career in locally produced Taiwanese music, taking a large share of the popular music market. In her short story "That Year, That Month and That Day" (*Mou-nien mou-yüeh te mou-yi-t'ien*),<sup>29</sup> which is actually the title of a folk song popular at that time, she depicts a young man who performs in a bar, a college graduate who loves singing, yet feels uncertain in the face of his girlfriend's concerned questioning: "What do you want to do in the future? Still want to sing? You

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Tzu-Chün's autobiography, *Mei-kui sheng-k'ai* (Rose Blossom) (Taipei: Shih-pao wen-hua, 1992), pp. 15-20.

27. "Huai-sha" (Embracing the Sand), *TC*, p. 223. *Fu, pi, hsing* (descriptive, analogical, and emotive) refer to the "three literary forms" (*san-ti*) in *The Book of Songs*. See Mi Wen-k'ai and Pei P'u-hsien, *Shih-ching hsin-shang yü yen-chiu* (The Appreciation and Study of the *Book of Songs*) (Taipei: San-min shu-chü, 1965), pp. 5-19.

28. Huang Ping-yin points out the positive significance of writing native songs in early 1980s Taiwan. See his *Chung-kuo yin-yüeh yü wen-hsüeh shih-hua chi* (Essays on the History of Chinese Music and Literature) (Taipei: Kuo-chia ch'u-pan-she, 1982), p. 211.

29. "Mou-nien mou-yüeh te mou-yi-t'ien" (That Year, That Month and That Day), *CS*, pp. 31-48.

cannot sing all your life, can you?"<sup>30</sup> The story expresses severe reservations about such students who threw themselves into a career in folk song music.

The narrator in "Recall" (Ssu-hsiang ch'i)<sup>31</sup> exhibits a low opinion of the "Sing Our Own Song" movement in his description of the quality of the singing :

Whoever has a throat can sing on stage. He does not really need to sing much, as the songs are all familiar ones, and the people will join in immediately. On-stage (performer) and off-stage (audience) become indistinguishable, and unite as one. The aim is to create exactly this kind of half-infatuated and half-drunk atmosphere.<sup>32</sup>

The story questions the lack of honesty and morality of the Nativist opposition.<sup>33</sup> It describes a young student who is inspired by his lecturer, an active Nativist supporter, but later very much regrets becoming an activist. The various items of campus activism are shown as a subversive conspiracy organised by a group of ill-intentioned members:

Fatty Wei was given an assignment when he returned to Taiwan two years ago. Several big events were organised, together with the activities of going into the mountain and to the countryside to collect examples of folk culture, to record and report them, etc. In fact, all these activities had strong backing (from opposition activists).<sup>34</sup>

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30. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

31. "Ssu-hsiang ch'i", *CS*, pp. 139-170.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 142.

33. "Ch'uan-shuo", *CS*, p. 250.

34. "Ssu-hsiang ch'i", *CS*, p. 162.

Later, we are told that the lecturer has been sent to prison for sedition, a measure used under the military regime to suppress all anti-KMT criticism. In conformity with the government's attitude, which identified the non-KMT political groups (tang-wai) opposition with support for Communism, Chu herself held a negative attitude towards them. Chu, just like the government interpreted any opposition to the regime as support for Communism.

In the story "Spring Breezes Bring Renewal" (Ch'un-feng ch'ui yu sheng),<sup>35</sup> a university lecturer, Ke Li-yüan encourages his students to go to the countryside to produce an exposé of the miserable life of the peasants. Chu portrays the lecturer as a dilettante who seeks, quite erroneously, to apply American anti-racist cultural theory to the situation in Taiwan. But, the story tells us that the peasants actually do not feel miserable or regret their situation in life. It suggests that the lecturer is manipulating the situation to suit his fashionable theory, without really caring about the actual living conditions of the poor people. The lecturer is shown as merely "self-centred," and his action is an attempt "to find his own reason for living" and "search for his own identity,"<sup>36</sup> not a genuine attempt to help the people.

The description of the appearance and behaviour of the lecturer is unmistakably meant to be read as a stereotype of a dingy criminal, rather than a well-educated lecturer:

He has started to wear very long side-burns that almost reach his chin. His hair is long, his beard seldom shaven. When he talks to you, his

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35. "Ch'un-feng ch'ui yu sheng" (Spring Breezes Bring Renewal), *CS*, pp. 127-138.

36. "Ch'un-feng ch'ui yu sheng", *CS*, p. 137.



eagerness implicitly threatens that if you dare to disagree with him, you simply must be out of date.<sup>37</sup>

The story leaves us with a feeling that the members of the Nativist movement are a bad influence, whereas students, who because of their innocence can be easily misled, succumb to the emotional atmosphere:

He (Ke) uses his elbow to touch you, showing a kind of intimacy. Students around laugh ambiguously, as if they completely understand the hidden meaning of what he just said. You can only join in and laugh unnaturally. . . Most students do not know each other, and are not eager to get to know each other. They come and go, like silhouettes with only a dark outline. You come here to discuss, debate, applaud and sing, and become part of the fervent atmosphere in which you gradually lose yourself. . . .<sup>38</sup>

Chu's holding a negative attitude towards the opposition was thus inextricably linked with the government's witchhunt against Communism. These three stories illustrate her position as that of a traditional *shih*, and confirm her belief in the legitimacy of the government's stand on the pressing issues of Nativism and democracy. Once again, like the *shih* in classical times, her manifest aim was to assist the government in reforming the country and not to encourage the common people to question government authority. Chu's formulation of this attitude cannot but sound arrogant and condescending towards the people:

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<sup>37</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>38</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

An even deeper decay of the era is in progress, which cannot be solved by only embracing society and caring for the public. Since the society you want to embrace is already an indifferent, cold structure and organisation under industrialism; and the public you want to care for consists merely of ordinary people, city people, citizens and countrymen (p'ing-min, shih-min, kung-min, kuo-min); they are not the sort of gifted people who figure in the (concept of) three talents -- Heaven, Earth and People. . . ."39

This is not to say that Chu T'ien-wen actually agreed with all government policies, but to stress that, for her, the first duty of the *shih* was to support the established order and avoid any danger of unrest. In view of the later development of Chu's work after her period in film, it is worth emphasising that at this time her approach to social development was in direct contrast to that of the Nativists. She based her prescription on an abstract framework of Confucian belief, whereas the Nativists aimed to tailor their proposals for social reform to the actual social problems of the general population.

The approach of Chu and the Three-Three group is, not surprisingly, reminiscent of a time-honoured practice in China, where dissent among the elite group would be expressed by non-violent and somewhat indirect forms of action. A well-known example occurred during the late Ming Dynasty when a group of officials led by Ku Hsien-ch'eng formed the "East Wood Society" (*Tung-lin tang*), the object of which was the unyieldingly strict application of Confucian standards especially to higher ranking government and public figures. Two famous campaigns of theirs were that against a grand secretary, Chang Chü-

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39. "Huai-sha", *TC*, p. 223. See also Chapter I, footnote no. 41.

cheng, and that against a notorious eunuch dictator, Wei Chung-hsien. The campaigns were not, of course, violent in any physical sense, rather they promoted intense discussion and criticism within "East Wood Academy" (Tung-lin shu-yüan). A typical action might involve memorialising the Emperor, but would never involve stirring up popular protest among the people, if for no other reason than that they would not consider the people to be relevant, let alone competent to have a view on any such situation. While the members cultivated the highest Confucian standards for themselves and other members at all times, they were also required to have a practical approach and keep their attention on the problems of government, even while discussing philosophy when withdrawn from the court. The scholars of "East Wood Society" were intent on "rescuing the world" (chiu-shih).<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the "East Wood Society" perceived political struggle not as the fulfilment of a programme or agenda, but rather as a moral struggle, the successful resolution of which would bring harmony to the nation. As Charles O. Hucker points out in his article on "The Tung-Lin Movement of the Late Ming Period," the cleavage developing in politics was not between different offices of state, or even between those in and out of favour at the Court, but between those considered to be "honest critics" (ch'ing-yi) or "good people" (shan-lei), as against those who act on selfish personal interest.<sup>41</sup> The scholars of the "East Wood Society," in making this distinction, were seeking to rectify developments

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<sup>40</sup>. See the section under "Ku Hsien-ch'eng," in *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), vol. I, A-L, pp. 736, 738, 742.

<sup>41</sup>. See Charles O. Hucker, "The Tung-Lin Movement of the Late Ming Period," in *Chinese Thought and Institutions*, ed. John Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 132-162. Quotes from p. 145.

in philosophy which, in their view, were undermining the whole structure of traditional morality.

It will be clear that Chu's desire to be a *shih* and promote harmony among mankind was virtually exactly the same as the approach of the "East Wood Society." However, while both the East Wood critics and their targets had a common frame of reference, there was little in common between Chu and the Nativists she criticised, for their partisanship and opportunism. Furthermore the Nativists had a strong belief in the efficacy of violent public protest, which continues today, and which is abhorrent to Chu. Chu's traditional political views of the time were based on a utopian vision of the world in harmony.

#### 2. 4 The Ideal of the Nation in Harmony

In the story "Recollections of a Butterfly," Chu depicts a peaceful imperial court scene, evoking the sense of a wise emperor, loyal *shih* and the continuation of the Chinese race. At the end of the story we see the narrator evoking a powerful image of ancient Chinese court ceremonial:

At the top of the long corridor is the dark blue sky, covered in stars. The pillars appear composed and sincere in the darkness, like high-ranking officials and scholars; complete with formal dress and a silk belt, already standing outside the golden imperial palace, waiting for the rising sun from the east. Three drum beats, boom, boom, boom, thousands of formal dresses move in unison up the golden steps. . . . "42

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42. "Hu-tieh chi", *CTSHC*, p. 218.

This paragraph, calling forth a sense of a contented society at peace with itself is a typical example Three-Three writing imagery.

Chu T'ien-wen's concept of the nation was based on an idealised picture of the Han dynasty. She quoted two phrases from a Chinese opera, which had also been quoted by Chang Ai-ling: "Civilian officials use their pens to manage the world, as military officers use their weapons to keep peace."<sup>43</sup> Then, she claimed that as long as the ideals of ancient civilisation and Confucianism -- the idea of a "ritual and music" (li yüeh) based political system (li-yüeh cheng-chih)<sup>44</sup> -- are applied, such an "innocent, pure and organised social order is not an impossible ideal" even in the modern world.

Chu's aesthetic views at this time were shown in detail in *Notes at Tamkang*, which illustrates the intimate link she saw between politics and culture, one of the defining characteristics of Chu's early thought:

Tolstoy's idea that the arts need to return to human affairs is what the most fashionable slogan called literature of politics. But, these people then assume that the literature of politics is only limited to literature of patriotic anti-communism or social nativism (hsiang-t'u wen-hsüeh). Such limits are truly narrow. They do not know that writings of the beauty of family, household utensils, people in the street, dancing and singing, mountains and lakes are all literature of politics.<sup>45</sup>

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43. "Hua-kang te yeh" (The Night in Hua-Kang), *HPTKS*, p. 168

44. The words "ritual" (*li*) and "music" (*yüeh*) refer to three Chinese classical texts, *Li-chi* (Record of Rites) *Yüeh-chi* (Record of Music) and *Shih-ching* (The Book of Songs). The three works are used to define a balance in society. It is said that while the law of ritual regulates people's behaviour, the function of music is to bring harmony to the people and unite people under the hierarchical system of government.

45. "K'an *Ch'iang-shan mei-jen*", *TC*, p. 99.

Chu's love of classical Chinese opera and art contrasted strongly with the view of the Nativists who scorned the official language, Mandarin, which Chu interpreted as an attempt to destroy Chinese culture. She would admit no criticism of the cultural roots of Chinese arts. Chu wrote about opera, music and dance as a way of showing her love for Chinese tradition. Even though Chinese opera in the twentieth century is a people's music, not the ancient "ritual and music" used in the imperial court; nonetheless because it is characteristically "Chinese," the Three-Three group used it to promote their vision of the ideal traditional Chinese way of life.<sup>46</sup> As set out in the *Four Books*, Confucius's doctrine: "Begin with poetry; mature with ritual; and achieve final perfection with music."<sup>47</sup>

Thus, Chu T'ien-wen used Chinese music and opera as a criterion for criticising modern Westernised arts, suggesting, for example, that "Western music is highly structured "rhythm," whereas Chinese classical music is mainly about the world of "tune." Her metaphor is picturesque but it is difficult to understand without direct experience of the different kinds of music involved:

The rhythm is like a tornado, constant and progressive. The tune is like hitting a stone, each hit produces one sound, like dew drops falling into

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<sup>46</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen's youngest sister Chu T'ien-yi was a student of Chinese opera, as were many members of the coterie. Chu T'ien-wen can also sing, and has performed with her sisters and other friends. Their interest in opera was so strong that a whole issue of the *Three Three Magazine* was devoted to the topic.

<sup>47</sup>. *Lun-yü*, 8:8. Hsü Shou-k'ai also points out that, in line with Confucian philosophy, the modern thinker Liang Ch'i-ch'ao promoted the idea that in order to improve the quality of the citizens, poetry and music are the important elements for spiritual education. See Hsü Shou-k'ai, *Chung-kuo ku-tai yi-wen ssu-hsiang man-hua* (On Chinese Classical Literary Thought) (Taipei: Mu-to, 1988), p. 343.

the heart of a lake, the soothing breeze slowly blowing ripples, as if continuous but also discontinuous.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, she uses Chinese opera as evidence that Chinese culture has a strong foundation which is capable of re-establishment even after being destroyed. She mentions the play, *Madam White Snake*, of which often only sections are presented, such as: "Wandering around the Lake and Borrowing the Umbrella," "Broken Bridge" and "Worship the Tower." In Chu T'ien-wen's opinion, "although these fragmented sections are discontinuous they are so wonderful and do not damage the unity of the whole story."<sup>49</sup> She took Chang Ai-ling's fiction as another example and praises it in the following terms: "Any page the wind blows open can be read independently."<sup>50</sup>

From these examples, it is clear that the young Chu T'ien-wen liked the conciseness and richness of the form of Chinese opera. It is as though she regarded Chinese opera as a living and enduring museum.

During the 1970s, experimental theatre became quite a vogue among students/intellectuals. Most of the plays were strongly influenced by the Western Theatre of the Absurd. Chu T'ien-wen's comments at the time on a performance of Julius Caesar graphically illustrated her condescending reaction:

In the last scene of Li Man-kui's *The Dream of the Jade Pond*, the dialogue between the Queen mother and the Han emperor (Wu-ti) takes place on the balcony in the audience. This surprises everyone, and is regarded as a praiseworthy and ground breaking idea. In the production

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48. "K'an *Ch'iang-shan mei-jen*", *TC*, p. 104.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

of *Julius Caesar* by the Department of Theatre Arts of the Chinese Culture University, at the end of Mark Antony's speech, the maddened crowd run towards the stage from the seats of audience. This technique also attempts to break up the confinement of the space on stage. But such little tricks are really quite pitiful.<sup>51</sup>

Chu T'ien-wen regarded experimental theatre as a random accumulation of techniques far from the Three-Three's ideal of Chinese ritual and music, for she thought that modern Chinese theatre made inadequate use of the possibilities afforded by the conceptual space of the Chinese opera stage:

Electricity has electric fields, magnetism has magnetic fields, drama should also have fields of dramatic energy. Peking opera's (ching-chü) energy field is unlimited time and space and also limited time and space. The two together become a vast and distant prospect on the civilised human world. If the modern drama does not build up this unlimited time and space field, instead just relying on thinking up ways to promote spoken drama (hua-chü, i.e. non-musical drama) as Chinese modern theatrical arts, it will be totally unable to establish itself as the prevailing cultural influence.<sup>52</sup>

The theatricism of the experimental theatre in the 1970s was the result of an obsession with the "Modernism" (Hsien-tai chu-yi) of the 1960s, which concentrated on structure, theme, psychology and techniques, and appeared to her to be far too mechanical and Westernised. Chu cared deeply for "traditional" poetical feeling, as when she wrote: "The last time Japanese classical music was

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<sup>51</sup>. "Li-yüan su-jen" (Artist of the Peking Opera), *TC*, p. 132.

<sup>52</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 132.



performed in the Museum of Arts, everyone listening to it, felt lost and unable to understand it. It is because we are now so used to the world of rhythm and of the laws of physics. Perhaps everyone has left their own culture too far behind for too long."<sup>53</sup>

Chu thought that traditional opera, unlike modern theatre, had the capacity to satisfy an audience composed of people of different educational levels. There is romance, comedy and acrobatic fighting, as well as music. In Chu's view, acrobatic fighting in Peking opera represents the height of culture: "Just to see the huge variety of martial arts in Chinese Peking opera -- experts can appreciate the skill, non-experts can enjoy the action, all would exclaim the power of creativity and action of the Chinese people, starting from the Yellow Emperor (Huang-ti), the great vigour of Chou Dynasty's ritual and music continuing Ch'in and Han, through the great Tang and Ming, always in its grand and glorious tradition."<sup>54</sup>

We can see that Chu, in her anxiety to promote Chinese opera, led herself into making rather implausible and far-fetched claims for its social worth. In reality the popularity of the Chinese opera in the 1970s was seriously declining in Taiwan. Though supported by the government, young people rejected it and were attracted away to modern cinemas and theatres. It is surprising that Chu could bring herself to believe that it is a problem of young peoples' appreciation: "The problem for Peking opera is actually not about reforming itself, but about having no one to continue the art."<sup>55</sup> To the Three-Three group, the protection of Chinese opera became a gesture symbolic of support for their ideal vision of

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53. "K'an *Ch'iang-shan mei-jen*", *TC*, p. 104.

54. "Hua-kang te yeh", *HPTKS*, p. 166

55. "Ling-lung t'a lai t'a ling-lung" (Exquisite Pagoda), *SCM*, p. 92.

traditional China, which continues in Chu T'ien-wen's views on domestic life, as I will explore in the next section.

## 2. 5 Marriage in the Peach Garden

If Chinese opera provided Chu with the ideal form of theatre, her picture of the ideal marriage was itself like a theatrical performance, real and yet not real. Chu romanticised the Chinese idea of marriage and described her vision of the ideal family as like a fairy land "Peach Garden."<sup>56</sup> Whenever she thought of the Chinese classical wedding, she imagined a glorious scene with red candles. For her, the newly wed couple's life was "splendid."<sup>57</sup> Once again, many of these images about marriage are derived from *The Book of Songs* (Shih-ching) and *Yüeh-fu* poems, particularly the section "Kuo-feng" in *The Book of Songs*, in which a courtly love scene is usually set in a harmonious pastoral setting.

The romantic image of a "red candle wedding" fascinated Chu, but just as important, conjoined to it, is the image of a couple working on a farm, the "husband ploughing and wife weaving," leading a productive life together. As Chu put it at the time: "Love is not a personal, private thing between two people, but is a matter of two people hand in hand facing the mulberry orchard and rice

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<sup>56</sup>. "Hsieh tsai ch'un-t'ien" (Writing in the Spring), *TC*, p. 66. Chu likes the imagery of peach associated with classical Chinese poetry, for instance, "Beautiful Peach Blossoms" (Tao-yao) from *The Book of Songs* (Shi-ching). Here, her notion of "Peach Garden" referred to the "The Peach Blossom Spring" (Tao-hua yüan-chi) of Tao Yüan-ming. For the English translation, see *The Poetry of T'ao Ch'ien*, trans. James Robert Hightower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 254.

<sup>57</sup>. "Chih-tzu yü-Kui" (Wedding), *TC*, p. 180.

farm (as a social duty)."<sup>58</sup> In this passage she clearly has in mind a love that brings together devotion to the common good, mutual purpose, shared work, affection, and potent creativity. Marriage, as depicted by Chu, was far from the ecstasy of being carried away by romantic love, working rather to integrate love into a larger perspective. As she says with more than a touch of hyperbole:

Perhaps it is San Mao's innocence and her joy of treating love as devotion that make me think of a man and woman, a woman and man, so great and pure, existing before the formation of the world. They leave the Garden of Eden and come to a nameless place with cliffs beside the water -- the colour of the Sun on the waves and water, the fields waiting to be ploughed, the mulberry orchard waiting to be planted. They happily start to work making clothes. . . .<sup>59</sup>

This passage portrays a married couple bearing mutual responsibility for the creation of the human world. Nevertheless, Chu's idea of equality in marriage involved a division of responsibility, the man going out to work and the woman staying at home. She argued that the reason why a woman should stay at home is that "the creativity of woman lies in the family. Civilisation begins with the family, from it we have pots and dishes, boats and carts, places and cottages, and such inventions."<sup>60</sup> The woman's role in the family is above all creative:

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58. "K'an *Ch'iang-shan mei-jen*", *TC*, p. 99.

59. "Yi-pei k'an chien-ch'i" (One Cup Sees the Spirit of the Sword), *SCM*, pp. 63-64.

60. "K'an *Chiang-shan mei-jen*", *TC*, p. 102.

The three meals of a day are a kind of creation. I often heard my mother complain about how difficult it was to buy and cook food. Here lies the hardship of creative labour.<sup>61</sup>

Few feminist thinkers would agree with such a view of the relative values of domestic "creativity" and professional creativity. But Chu was not consciously demeaning women. She was only thinking of her concept of a Chinese idyllic married life. Chu considered that if a woman goes out to work, competing with men, she loses her role as a woman; at worst, she could turn herself into a cold automaton: "professional woman nowadays are far away from family life. They may appear to have the ability to make an independent living, but in fact their creativity has greatly decreased."<sup>62</sup> In fact, her ideal woman would appear to be a combination of mother and child, "with a tender bodily curve," "though innocent and ordinary, but having a natural femininity," "like Mother Earth, strong and pure. . . ."<sup>63</sup>

The story "Flowers on the Path" (Mo-shan hua)<sup>64</sup> describes a young mother, Chia-pao whose married life is refreshing and exciting, and who is seen to react kindly and naturally with childlike simplicity to her surroundings:

On the ground is a washing basin, filled with soaking diapers. . . . Anyone who comes to this place will grow old except for Chia-pao. She sings while she washes clothes and cooks a evening meal for seven or eight.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

<sup>62</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>63</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>64</sup>. "Mo shang hua" (Flowers on the Path), *CTSHC*, pp. 69-188

<sup>65</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

Chia-pao moreover lives in a timeless world, hence lacks any sense of decay or change:

Chia-pao does not know that she is young. The prosperity, adversity (of the world), and the vicissitudes (of human affairs) leave no trace on her. . .

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The theme of "Flowers on the Path" is that of a society, in which wife and husband are treated as the basic unit, perpetuated from generation to generation. The family is the essential element of the establishment of a good society. As a young wife, and as an ideal mother figure, Chia-pao works diligently, busy with her domestic work without any complaint or distraction. Again, the female protagonist Mrs Hsiao in "A Hibiscus Flower"(Fu-sang yi-chih)<sup>67</sup> is described as a housewife, who not only cares for her family, but for the nation too: "Every Wednesday and Friday, (Mrs. Hsiao) teaches Chinese to two foreign ladies. Sometimes she also teaches them how to make spring rolls and dumplings, always enthusiastic about being a good citizen ambassador."<sup>68</sup> In illustrating these young women by these admirable personality traits, these two stories promote the virtuous pair of wife and husband as depicted in *The Book of Songs*.

No doubt Chu genuinely felt that this depiction was appropriate, but it is hard to escape the feeling that it would, more likely, only be written by someone who did not need to work in an office or care for a family. Her description of marriage as a "Peach Garden," as being both fairyland and human world, reflects

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66. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

67. "Fu-sang yi-chih" (A Hibiscus Flower), *CS*, pp. 51-64.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

a sense of a timeless stability consistent with her view of the harmony of the nation, but not really consistent with reality.

## 2. 6 Idyllic Love and Friendship

Chu felt that she had a responsibility to find, among her friends, the most talented people to serve the nation. With hyperbole, she describes one of her female friends, Fan-fan at that time: "Fan-fan is such a strong person, so I cannot imagine that she could have experienced suffering. Her suffering is also my pain<sup>69</sup>, I feel more pain and anger than she does. For her and me, and for the Three-Three Society looking for talented people for the country, I will not let Fan-fan allow herself to suffer even a little bit."<sup>70</sup> Considering such friends as unique and forming a solid foundation for the nation's future, she felt joyful and grateful to know them.

We shall see in this section that in Chu's love stories, the most prominent feature is that everyone, whether man or woman, is talented and loveable, which means all the lovers are represented in terms of "the hero and the beauty" (ying-hsiung mei-jen), giving her stories a highly charged romantic atmosphere. As in "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly" romantic stories, Chu's protagonists have an inexhaustible supply of sincerity. E. Perry Link points out that, having "extraordinary inborn gifts" is the most important element of this romantic convention. Moreover, in this kind of romantic novel, such protagonists with

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<sup>69</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen in fact used the expression "meng-ch'en," which refers to an emperor fleeing the capital, or being taken prisoner.

<sup>70</sup>. "Hua wen" (The Flower Asks), *TC*, p. 204.

their extraordinary inborn gifts naturally "carry Confucian virtues, such as benevolence, loyalty and self-sacrifice."<sup>71</sup>

A love triangle is described in "Flowers on the Path"<sup>72</sup> in which a married man attempts to form a relationship outside marriage. However, after meeting the man's wife and seeing the couple together socially, the woman changes her attitude. Feeling inferior to the wife, she decides she is not suitable for the man; she does not allow herself to indulge in sentimental feelings for him. It is clear that this supersensitive female protagonist gives total, unswerving loyalty to what she sees as her moral duty. The extra-marital courtship which might have led to a serious affair ends quickly. One can see once again that Chu T'ien-wen's depiction of romance was always conducted with a strong sense of moral values. Courtship was presented almost like a game in which everyone is innocent: "Falling in love with others is just like a bunch of kids playing in the sand on the seashore, absorbed in their play, forgetful of the consequences, while the sun, the moon, and the stars have all fallen into the waves."<sup>73</sup>

The characters in "Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao" although in love, have very little explicit physical contact. Only one story, "Rebirth of the Woman" (Nü chih su) depicts a young high school boy's physical desire for his girlfriend, but the actual description of physical love is minimal. The story is mainly concerned with the worries that adolescent couples have about pregnancy at an age when they hardly understand sex.<sup>74</sup>

In the classical literary romance, a beautiful woman fulfills herself in love, and it is seen as fitting that she should die for love; on the other hand, the main

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<sup>71</sup>. E. Perry Link, Jr. *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 65.

<sup>72</sup>. "Mo shang hua" (Flowers on the Path), *CTSHC*, pp. 69-188.

<sup>73</sup>. "Wo meng hai-t'ang" (I Dream About China), *TC*, p. 153.

<sup>74</sup>. "Nü chih su" (Rebirth of the Woman), *CTSHC*, pp. 111-137.

function of a hero is to serve China and it is fitting that the hero should die for his nation. In Chu T'ien-wen's case, her feelings for the nation were similar to her feelings for a loved person; they were like two forms of what was fundamentally the same pure love. As always, the glory of the fulfilment of patriotic duty prevails, as she said:

I only whisper intimate and soothing words to the land and youth of the Chinese nation. It is my only lover, whom I think of incessantly and yearn for eternally.<sup>75</sup>

The nationalistic sentiment is thus an integral part of Chu's personality, and was always expressed explicitly. It is related to the purity of her original ideals and the extraordinary depth of her feelings about beauty and love.

Actually, Chu went further than this and identified the nation with "righteousness":

Above love, there is a genuine feeling of righteousness, like the radiance of God which links together the past and present and leads on to eternity. The way of Heaven lasts forever so that we can transcend success, failure, gratitude and hatred. . . .<sup>76</sup>

In Chu's early work, no matter how modern the context, Confucian writings come to the fore. However, Confucian principles seems to be more onerous for women than for men. In the short story "Winter Plum with Three Variations" (La-

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75. "Wo meng hai-t'ang", *TC*, p. 156.

76. "T'an Ch'ih-ti chih lien" (*On Naked Earth*), *TC*, p. 124.



mei san-nung),<sup>77</sup> a young wife, Mei-yi is seeing her husband Chieh-ming off to the airport with a group of friends, including her husband's ex-girlfriend, Ho Yü-wen. Ho Yü-wen believes that she is the only woman Chieh-ming loves, and that the reason Chieh-ming married Mei-yi was merely because Mei-yi was pregnant.

Although the man assures the wife many times that he loves only her, the wife, knowing Ho's feeling, constantly asks herself whether her husband is truly in love with her. However, at the airport, the man is very affectionate towards his ex-girl friend:

At the moment of departure, someone creates a disturbance by asking Chieh-ming to kiss good-bye. He quickly looks around, but Mei-yi is pushed away to the other side. Ho Yü-wen is standing in front of him, already in tears. Then, he, looking at Mei-yi, holds Yü-wen in his arms and kisses her on the cheek. Everyone cheers, Mei-yi shouts and claps her hands along with everyone, and gets quite carried away for a while.<sup>78</sup>

It makes the wife feel sad to see her girl friends' infatuation with her husband, and to feel she is sharing him with others. However, her sadness is directed not at her marriage, but at the fact that she and the other women are both in love with this man. The story ends with a sense that each of these women will carry their burden of love for the man indefinitely:

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<sup>77</sup>. "La-mei san-nung" (Winter Plum with Three Variations), *CS*, pp. 171-194.

<sup>78</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

The music of the gospel is far away, the small distant sound hangs in the wide, empty street. The houses on both sides of the street have lights on, each square window seems to hold something precious for the dark night. . . Ho Yü-wen maintains her (vigil). Mei-yi warms her hands with a hot cup of tea, keeping guard by the window and the cold, extremely cold night sky of the frigid weather.<sup>79</sup>

Chu's story is not a classical literary tragedy, but does convey the sadness of the passing of youthful innocence as friends grow up. This kind of sentimental feeling is clearly expressed in the story "A Sunny May,"<sup>80</sup> in which the importance the protagonists ascribe to friendship and the strong emotions evoked are illustrated. This time, it is the woman Hsiao-ni, who is fond of two of her male friends A-yen and Chou-chou. Having quarrelled with A-yen, when Chou-chou comes to comfort her, Hsiao-ni cries out in frustration: "It is true that in those days the four of us had no worries. Chou-chou, tell me, why do people need to grow up?. . ."<sup>81</sup> But, her sense of loss indicates that although falling in love with one person, A-yen, she is unwilling to lose the friendship of the other, Chou-chou.

On the other hand, Chou-chou recalls the time he spent with Hsiao-ni thinking that if he was really her lover, he would not let her down. He also recalls an occasion when the three of them are walking in the street chatting, thoroughly enjoying each others' company. Later, Chou-chou tells Hsiao-ni he is leaving for Britain soon:

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<sup>79</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>80</sup>. "Wu-yüeh ch'ing" (A Sunny May), *CS*, pp. 195-220.

<sup>81</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 209. "The four" are Hsiao-ni herself, A-yen, Chou-Chou and another friend, Yüan Si.

Chou-chou feels depressed too, and says gloomily: 'We are bound to break up. When the time comes, everyone has to part. . . .'

Hsiao-ni listens with fear in her heart. Angrily and quickly she says: 'Anyway, it's a cheat, a big cheat! . . .'<sup>82</sup>

Similar thoughts occur in the essay "Farewell, Shepherd's Bridge"(Mu-yang-ch'iao tsai-chien), in which Chu described her joyful feelings about friendship in terms consistent with the romantic tone of her fiction. In describing one of her girl friends, BB, she wrote:

Does it mean that girls must marry when they grow up? I only wish to stay forever at the age of white blouses and black skirts, (so as) to feel my heart shake and soul stir at her every smile and frown. Life is painful but also joyful, my whole body seems to be full and transparent, as if a single touch could shatter it in pieces on the ground.<sup>83</sup>

These two pieces, her short story "A Sunny May" and essay "Farewell, Shepherd's Bridge" are representative of Chu's treatment of love and friendship in her early work. In line with her views on marriage which are based on Confucian thinking, Chu's depiction of love and friendship show an emotion equally intense as that portrayed in traditional Chinese novels. It bears some resemblance to the unfolding of the characters in the novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, and in the play *The Peony Pavilion* where at the beginning of these works, we have intense, sensitive and infatuated young lovers. Where Chu's

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<sup>82</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>83</sup>. "Mu-yang-ch'iao tsai-chien", *TC*, p. 25.

protagonists differ from those in these classical texts is that, at this point in her development as a writer, Chu has not yet developed a writing technique adequate for the depiction of the maturing of her characters like that of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* and *The Peony Pavilion*. At this stage, her light weight stories do not have the philosophical substance to convey the sense of "enlightenment" implicit in the Taoist thought on which these classical texts were based.<sup>84</sup> Her early love stories remained confined to the ecstatic happiness of the young lovers' closed world, and the unfailing triumph of perfect friendship among men and women.

## 2. 7 Happy Families

In her early works, the Hakka Taiwanese background derived from her mother does not play a significant role. Most of the essays in *Notes at Tamkang* reveal nostalgic feelings about Chu T'ien-wen's relatives in China. The essay "I Dream about China" (Wo meng hai-t'ang)<sup>85</sup> showed how her father's family moved around China during the KMT's retreat; and how they supported the KMT by joining the party and assisting in community development works. Chu T'ien-wen found moral security in the reflected glory of the history of her extended family, believing that her family exemplified the ideal Confucian concept of the educated household. In the short story "Midnight Song" (Tzu-yeh ke)<sup>86</sup> the voice of a happy child is used to describe the lives of the second generation

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<sup>84</sup>. See Lucien Miller's discussion on this aspect, *Masks of Fiction in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1975), pp. 82, 94-96.

<sup>85</sup>. "Wo meng hai-t'ang", *TC*, pp. 149-156. "Hai-t'ang" means Chinese cherry-apple tree which symbolises China.

<sup>86</sup>. "Tzu-yeh ke" (Midnight Song), *CS*, pp. 61-125.

of mainlander, generally raised in civil service communities. The child's neighbours are like an idealised extended family to her.

However, her depiction of the extended family is not always happy. There were stories which show cases of broken homes. For instance, in "The Coconut Is Bound to the Palm" (Yeh-tzu chieh-tsai tsung-lü shang)<sup>87</sup> a young man suffers psychological trauma because of his parents' divorce; in "Young Scholars" (Ch'ing-ch'ing tzu-chin),<sup>88</sup> a young adopted girl is not being shown enough love by her foster parents. Nevertheless, Chu T'ien-wen made her characters take a positive view, even though they were deprived of parental love, they were depicted as having good relationships with their brothers or sisters. This sibling love suggests that the family can have a powerful spiritual strength capable of comforting people no matter how unstable the family. An example can be seen in the description of the adopted girl Pi-chüan, who always recalls the times she was with her adopted brother, Ch'ing-wang on their way to and from school, the scenery and the roadsides bursting with insects and animal life -- "a crystal sky," "busy ants" and "colourful dragonflies," symbolise the strong bond between the sister and brother.<sup>89</sup>

Chu had a somewhat idealised attitude towards the Three-Three group, including her parents and siblings. She gave their relationship as fellow members and writers a spiritual pre-eminence over family ties:

The friends of the Three-Three group seem to live in a timeless, spaceless landscape. Parents are not parents, sisters are not sisters, and even more

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87. "Yeh-tzu chieh-tsai tsung-lü shang" (The Coconut Is Bound to the Palm), *CS*, pp. 7-29.

88. "Ch'ing-ch'ing tzu-chin" (Young Scholars), *CS*, pp. 67-98.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

so the married couples are not married couples. We sit and chat under the lamp, faces are like night blooming cereus in full blossom. . . .<sup>90</sup>

It was not just in her fiction, then, that she stressed the importance of friendship, for she would always emphasise intellectual compatibility as well as family ties. As an unrelenting, high brow *shih*, Chu had a vision of the youthful patriotic ardour of the hero and the beauty who pursue the salvation of the nation without recourse to violence to others, or themselves, and who were, according to Chu, represented in modern Taiwan by Chu herself and her coterie who were deeply concerned with the future of the nation.

## 2. 8 The "Hero and Beauty"

Chu T'ien-wen ends *Notes at Tamkang* with an essay entitled "Embracing the Sand" (Huai-sha), which is also the title of the last poem by Ch'ü Yüan, a patriotic poet (343? -290? B.C. ), someone whose uncompromising loyalty became a legend of moral rectitude.<sup>91</sup> Chu regarded the poet's suicide as a passive and ineffective protest, proclaiming that Ch'ü Yüan's suicide should not be a model for the Three-Three group, since "the *shih* live only to be killed or sacrificed but not to commit suicide."<sup>92</sup> This idea is clearly influenced by Hu Lan-ch'eng's philosophy, particularly appropriate for him, in valuing survival rather than death -- for a true *shih* should live to fight another day. In glorifying the heroic image

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<sup>90</sup>. "Wo meng hai-t'ang", *TC*, p. 156.

<sup>91</sup>. See *Ch'u T'zu: The Songs of the South* (An Ancient Chinese Anthology), trans. David Hawkes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 70-72.

<sup>92</sup>. "Li-yüan su-jen", *TC*, p. 130.

of the survivor, she shows her wish to unite intellectuals and calls for active involvement with society:

In any case, we do not want to be like Ch'ü Yüan. Because, because we live in this generation -- everything of this generation is ours. . . every bit of corruption and tears is all our own. If God's will wants us to rise, we shall rise together with all things of the epoch; if not, we are not going to drown ourselves in the Mi-luo river.<sup>93</sup> If we must be ruined, let us to be ruined together. Wait for this second deluge to pass. If someone is lucky enough to survive, he would once again make a fresh start with an olive leaf.<sup>94</sup>

Chu T'ien-wen's identification with her heroes, such as the emperors of the first Han Dynasty, and of course, Sun Yat-sen, seems to have given her confidence in propounding her ideas. These great historical leaders were represented by the Three-Three group as having been steeped in the pain and despair of failure; but despite experiencing many difficulties finally to have achieved their goal of establishing a new regime. They became her role models and reinforced her determination to renew the national culture.

When reading about the experiences of these heroes, Chu was strongly drawn to them, since they showed her that "genius is meant to be lonely."<sup>95</sup> Chu later draws on the heroic myths of Chinese history to point out the difference between great people and common people: "The heroes and beauties all think of

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<sup>93</sup>. Mi-luo river, name of a river in Hunan province where ancient poet Chün Yüan drowned himself.

<sup>94</sup>. "Huai-sha", *TC*, p. 223.

<sup>95</sup>. "Hsien-yüan ju hua", *TC*, p. 140.

themselves as favoured by Heaven."<sup>96</sup> The concept of the strong survivor provided the youthful Chu T'ien-wen with a positive attitude towards life in her college years.<sup>97</sup> Later, the concept would further support her idea that no matter how difficult a situation, heroes and heroines should have the ability to retain their resolve and inspiration, at all costs.

Obviously in Chu's early stories, the characters are not required to show similar levels of resolution, the closest that we get is the female protagonist in Chu's "A Loving Couple"<sup>98</sup> who reacts unconventionally in expressing her desire for independence. When her boy friend praises her as being pretty as a flower, saying that he regards himself as the "gardener," she retorts "Why don't you be the cockscomb flower, and I the gardener?"<sup>99</sup> The protagonist does not subscribe to conventional social behaviour; she tears up her boy friend's letter simply because it is exciting to hear the sound of tearing. This kind of idiosyncratic behaviour recalls the scene of Ch'ing-wen's tearing a fan in *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, and the concubine of Hsia Chieh, the last emperor of the Hsia Dynasty, Mei-hsi, who liked to hear the sound of tearing silk and was therefore considered a bad woman in the society at that time.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>. "An tzu hsi jen pi hua ti" (I Myself Happily Enjoy Being Lower Than the Flower), *HPTKS*, p. 154.

<sup>97</sup>. For instance, Chu T'ien-wen once considered quitting college when she was in her second year of university. She said that it was because she disliked the curriculum structure and wanted to study on her own. Her mentor Hu Lan-Ch'eng encouraged her to continue her study by saying that being a "hero" or "beauty," one should not distance oneself from other people, but work with them. See "Huai-sha", *TC*, p. 214.

<sup>98</sup>. "Li-jen hsing", *CTSHC*, pp. 63-96.

<sup>99</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>100</sup>. Chu mentions these women in an essay "Ts'ai-wei, ts'ai-feng" (Benefice Flower and Wind), *HPTKS*, pp. 196.



Society's idea of "bad" or "idiosyncratic" women was of course based on male standards. In Chu's eyes these women were not bad, they were simply innocent and unconventional people behaving naturally. In defending historical "bad" women, she pointed out that they "naturally expanded the standards of good or bad, to a point where no one can label them as good or evil."<sup>101</sup> The famous heroine Pao-Ssu, a favourite concubine of Emperor Yu of the Chou Dynasty, who cost him his empire, was seen in Chu's eyes as a symbol of women's power. What Chu argued was that every political system and theory which belonged to the male world inevitably became stale, since it became absorbed in itself; for instance, the culture of the Shang Dynasty was interpreted by Chu as "beautiful and sensual," "indulgent in its own style," "in order to renew such a culture, it needs first to be destroyed."<sup>102</sup> Chu agreed with the historical saying that women were the cause of the disastrous fall (nü-huo) of dynasties. She also argued that women's intuition enabled them to sense the signals warning of a dynasty's approaching end.

She did not develop further her argument about the intuitive power of historical heroines or the rational strength of emperor/hero. The awareness of female potential gained through reading about historical heroines led her to re-evaluate and place a new value on her own gender. This was an important step in her confirming to herself that women can indeed achieve great things. For she thought there were exciting models in history with which women can identify. Throughout the Three-Three period, Chu's idea of the warrior was of a woman who could compete with and beat the male expert on his own ground.

At a 1981 symposium "The Limit and Breakthrough of Women's Writing," Chu denounced Western feminism which, she believed, centred itself on a view

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101. "K'an ch'iang-shan mei-jen", *TC*, p. 101.

102. "Ts'ai-wei, ts'ai-feng", *HPTKS*, p. 200.

of women as inferior, she argued that one should look for examples of notable women from Chinese history before adopting Western feminist ideas.

In the same symposium, her sister Chu T'ien-hsin stated clearly that she did not consider herself confined by the label "woman writer":

Our family educational background gave us a very wide latitude, and these days we can achieve whatever we want.<sup>103</sup>

The conclusive extra impetus to the crystallisation of the sisters' views that every woman has her rightful place in history, was Hu Lan-ch'eng's series of didactic articles, in which he vigorously expounded a series of aspects of the history of women from the legendary creator Nü Wa down to the wives of peasants.<sup>104</sup>

For the young Chu T'ien-wen, the dramatised female figures from Chinese opera served as the epitome of the ideal woman. Most of the theatrical characters that Chu liked can be characterised as princesses/warriors; for instance, Fan Li-hua, the minority princess or Wang Chao-chün, a lady of the Han court who was later married to a chieftain of a northern tribe in the performance of matrimonial diplomacy. In Chu's mind, their lives were exciting and fulfilling, although their hearts were not devoid of feminine sentiment; on the contrary, they sought to fight for their country despite breaking the social rules of their time by showing courage and initiative.

To her, femininity was the "power of Spring, which enables every plant to be reborn and last forever."<sup>105</sup> She regarded the female protagonist from the folk

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103. "Fu-nü hsieh-tso te chü-hsien yü tu-p'o" (The Limit and Breakthrough of Women's Writing), *Lien-ho fu-k'an* (United Daily), 1981, March, 8-9.

104. For example, see Hu Lan-Ch'eng's book *Chin-jih ho-jih hsi* (What Day is Today) (Taipei: San-san shu-fang, 1990), pp. 69-86.

105. "Hsieh-tsai ch'un-t'ien" (Writing in the Spring), *TC*, p. 65.

legend "Peach Girl fights with Chou Kung" (which is well known for its fighting scenes between a young woman of exceptional ability and a resourceful Taoist monk) as testing the strengths of their magic power, and lauded the woman's independent spirit, for "no one can beat her life strength."<sup>106</sup>

Her idealisation of princesses/warriors or historical "bad" beauties, contains its own contradiction. Even though she has widened these women's subordinate roles as concubines into the broader, more positive function of woman warrior, her ideas resemble what Julia Kristeva has called "political sublimation"<sup>107</sup> rather than actual empowerment. Her heroic women, for instance Wang Chao-chün, helped the "male world" to accomplish its own aims rather than achieve women's own political power. In the end, Chu T'ien-wen did not think that these beauties would lead their countries, and in this sense, they implicitly reinforce centuries-old patriarchal power structures.

It will be clear that by the time she graduated from Tamkang, Chu had been involved with Nativism and its proponents only at an intellectual level. This was to change quickly, as we will see in next chapter, when she started to work in the television and film industries, initially as a junior member of a team of nativists.

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>107</sup> In commenting on the characterisation of fighting women in modern Chinese theatre, specifically, Communist dramas, Kristeva points out that they are shown in a rather idealised situation: "No more concern with interpersonal or interfamilial relationships; the sublimation is intense, it taps the impatient desires; but it leaves no room for whatever in the psyche, the libido, the imagination, has not been channelled into political sublimation." Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows (London: Marion Boyars, 1974), p. 155.

## Chapter III

### Exposure to Nativism: Chu T'ien-wen's Film Stories

In the year after graduation, Chu started work as a television playwright, collaborating with others including her sister, Chu T'ien-hsin. The two sisters were still firm adherents of the Three-Three philosophical views. However, some of the other members began to question the relevance of the Three-Three ideas about the situation in Taiwan.<sup>1</sup> A fellow adherent, Yang Chao later sarcastically commented: "Three-Three ideals may have been appreciated by the sisters' inner circle of friends, but were not necessarily acceptable to their colleagues who had been working in the real world for many years."<sup>2</sup> Chu was working in an atmosphere in which scepticism about KMT anti-Communism was increasing. A wide debate had begun about relations with mainland China, what the status of Taiwan should be, and about Nativism and Westernisation. Working in television, Chu's stories stopped portraying happy students on the campus

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<sup>1</sup>. There is no indication that Three-Three Society announced a definite date for its closure. But the Three-Three choir was disbanded around May 26, 1983 which may indicate the dissolution of the society. See Chu Hsi-ning, *Hsiao-shuo chia-tsu* (A Family of Novelists) (Taipei: Hsi-tai, 1986), p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>. Yang Chao, "Lang-man mieh-chüeh te chuan-che: P'ing *Wo chi-te*" (The Abandonment of Romance: On *I Remember*), chap. in *Wen-hsüeh, she-hui yü li-shih hsiang-hsiang: Chan-hou wen-hsüeh shih san-lun* (Literature, Society and the Imagination of History: Essays on Post-War History of Literature) (Taipei: Lien-ho wen-hsüeh, 1995), p. 156.

dreaming about the motherland, and became realistic, the characters struggling with social and family problems.<sup>3</sup>

Chu's original plan had been to go to the U.S.A. at some point after graduation to write about the lives of Chinese students overseas. However, in 1982 her short story "The Story of Hsiao-Pi" (Hsiao-Pi te ku-shih) won her an Excellence Prize in the "Lien-ho Pao Writing Competition." The story captured the attention of two film directors, Ch'en K'un-hou and Hou Hsiao-hsien; and with Chu T'ien-wen and Hou as screen writers, the story was filmed by Ch'en K'un-hou in three months. To Chu's surprise, the film became both a box office hit and a critical success, winning prizes for Best Film and Best Screenplay at the 1983 Taiwan Golden Horse Film Festival.<sup>4</sup>

So, 1982 was marked by significant changes for Chu, she had left the college atmosphere and begun work, the burgeoning of Taiwanese consciousness was placed firmly in front of her, making her take cognisance of the views of those, including second generation mainlanders, who considered themselves Taiwanese, rather than misplaced Chinese nationals.

We may well feel that Chu was extremely lucky to get the opportunity to work in the film industry as easily as it appears that she did. However, there was a group of young people just then attempting to bring about radical change in the industry, and Chu was fortunate enough to come to their attention at this particular time. Given its importance to Chu's career, before discussing her actual

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<sup>3</sup>. For instance, see her short story, "Yi-tien pu-tsai" (No More Garden of Eden) in *Tsui-hsiang nien te chi-chieh* (The Most Memorable Season) (Taipei: San-san, 1989), p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>. In the same year, at almost the same time, her short story "No More Garden of Eden" won the Shih-Pao Literary Excellence Prize, but it was "Story of Hsiao-Pi" which made her name known to the public. See "Wo-men te An-an" (Our An-an), *TYHSC*, p. 6.

film stories, I shall describe briefly the state of the film industry at the time and say something about the talented group of people that Chu had fallen in with.

### 3.1. Settled in the Film World

Chu T'ien-wen had been reluctant at first to join the film industry, she felt that an intellectual should not descend into the soiling business of money-making. Another reason was that the films that the industry had been producing were not artistically innovative or intellectually challenging.<sup>5</sup>

However, prosperity was increasing, and the social and cultural atmosphere was becoming more relaxed, and as part of the debate on Taiwanese identity which permeated the political atmosphere, the government became active in the film industry.<sup>6</sup> In 1979 the Golden Horse Prize for films produced in Taiwan

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<sup>5</sup>. In 1978, for example, about seventy percent of the films shown in Taiwan were of three kinds, firstly, sensational entertainment martial arts films (kung-fu), secondly, melodramas, and thirdly, ideological films featuring anti-Communist, anti-Japanese, or military propaganda stories. Film was treated as either simple entertainment or as propaganda, and was not regarded as an artistic or cultural medium. Although there were some films of artistic value, they were a small minority. See *Chung-hua min-kuo tien-ying nien-chien* (The Year Record of ROC's Films) (Taipei: ROC tien-ying fa-chan chi-chin hui, 1979), p. 7.

<sup>6</sup>. In the 1980s, Taiwan began a long period of rapid and sustained economic growth that provided the financial base for development. The actual course that the political and social change accompanying the increase in prosperity would take was profoundly influenced by the state of diplomatic relations with the USA. Thus, at a time when Taiwan -- government and people -- felt increasingly beleaguered in a hostile diplomatic environment, the country (in reality) or Chinese province (formally) had an increasing capacity to undertake export-led expansion. The new rising middle-class capitalists needed to retain the ability to develop overseas outlets for their enterprises, and the workers and farmers wanted to share in the new prosperity, and both groups

was introduced; and a Campus Film Festival was set up to show local films free of charge to young audiences on campus; the National Film Library was set up in 1983; and film was classified by law as a "cultural enterprise."<sup>7</sup> In the hope of keeping a balance between artistic and commercial values, the "Central China Film Company" started to encourage young intellectuals to participate in film making. The company used four young film makers, who collectively produced *In Our Time* ((Kuang-yin te ku-shih, 1982) which traced four decades of Taiwan's post-war socio-economic change through the stories of four individuals, thus starting a new path for Taiwanese cinema. These four were, directors Tao T'ien-ch'ien, Yang Te-ch'ang, K'e Yi-cheng, and script writer Wu Nien-chen.

The team work of *In Our Time* set the pattern for the development of the New Cinema: the new directors and writers worked collectively; the basic concept was to reflect in their films their own experiences of living in Taiwan, so as to reveal the truth, as they saw it, underlying the events of the past thirty years; and to counterbalance the low quality commercial and propaganda films being produced by the existing industry.<sup>8</sup> In this way, they attempted to realise a

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exerted pressure for the political change that economic prosperity brings. The new regime with the installation of Chiang Ching-kuo as President in succession to his father, found a new flexibility to enable it to make a positive response to the requirement for a less authoritarian style of government, and more openness on social and cultural matters. For a detailed discussion on the period of Chiang Ching-kuo, see Tai Kuo-hui, *Taiwan tsung-t'i hsiang* (Taiwan Face On) (Taipei: Yüan-liu, 1989).

7. Sha Jung-feng, *Pin-fen tien-ying ssu-shih ch'un* (The Forty Glorious Years of Films) (Taipei: Kuo-chia tien-ying tu-shu-kuan, 1994), p. 137.

8. Wu Cheng-huan, "Taiwan T'ien-ying wen-hua ho liang-chung tien-ying kuan" (Taiwan Film Culture and Two Concepts), in *Tang-tai hua-yü tien-ying lun-shu* (The Discourse of the Contemporary Chinese Film) ed. Li T'ien-to (Taipei: Shih-pao ch'u-pan-she, 1996), p. 23.

vision which would reflect the social and geographic character of Taiwan itself, and improve the aesthetic quality of films made in Taiwan.

For the previous forty years, foreign films, mostly American and British had dominated the industry, and had become the target for production values and professionalism to which the local industry would aspire. It was, thus, through the birth of the "Taiwanese New Cinema" that Taiwan was enabled to find its own voice in the period following the Nativist literary movement of the 1970s.<sup>9</sup> The Nativist literary works of Wang Chen-ho and Huang Ch'un-ming were adapted into films by the new directors and reached a wider audience.

Moreover, most of the New Cinema young script writers and directors had been born in Taiwan after 1949, had not experienced the turbulent times of the War of Resistance and civil war, and had grown up in a period of rapid social and economic improvement. These new directors/script writers created neo-nativist stories about both the countryside and the city, derived from their personal experiences. These works were generally welcomed by the critics both artistically, and for their more socially realistic themes.

Before *The Story of Hsiao-Pi*, both Hou and Ch'en Kun-hou had already had experience of working in the film industry, their cooperation had already produced seven successful films about country life in Taiwan. In critic Chan Hung-chih's opinion, Hou and Ch'en had a vision of a specifically Taiwanese culture, and had achieved high artistic standards even before they became known for their work in New Cinema.<sup>10</sup> Initially working with Hou and Ch'en,

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<sup>9</sup>. While some of the major Nativist writers, such as Wang T'o were in prison because of a political incident in 1978 (Formosa Incident, Mei-li-tao shih-chien) the New Cinema young writers and directors continued the promotion of Nativism.

<sup>10</sup>. Ch'en had been the cameraman for senior director Li Hsing's important works *Home Town People* (Yüan-hsiang jen) *Story of Small City* (Hsiao-ch'eng ku-shih) and *A Single Boat in the Stormy Sea* (Wang-yang chung te yi-t'iao ch'uan), whereas Hou Hsiao-



Chu found that the film business was not necessarily solely concerned with money making, and that it could also be creatively inspiring. Chu was deeply moved by Hou and Ch'en's films such as *Cute as the Flying Butterfly* (Ch'iao ju ts'ai-tie fei fei fei) and *The Green, Green Grass* (Ts'ai na ho-p'an ch'ing-ts'ao ch'ing), for their affectionate depiction of simple human relationships.

Hou and Ch'en's approach to the Taiwanese countryside shows an innocent rural life, radically different from Chu T'ien-wen's serious depiction of the pastoral family as the basic social unit of the state. In an essay, Chu described the revelation of watching *Cute as the Flying Butterfly*:

I laughed throughout the film. Especially, when I looked at this film from a screen writer's point of view, I was very surprised that a screen play could be written in such way, I then realised what Hsiao-hsien meant when he talked about the pace and (dynamic tension of) breath of a screen play.<sup>11</sup>

Chu T'ien-wen's early interest in the Chinese lyrical tradition found a new field as she delighted in "bright," "healthy," and "real" films about the countryside.<sup>12</sup> She herself later wrote film scripts laying heavy stress on childhood memories of her grandparents' rural village.

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hsien was a screen writer for Lai Ch'en-ying's *Autumn Lotus* (Ch'iu-lien) and Li Hsing's *Good Morning, Taipei* (Tsao-an, Taipei). See Chan Hung-chih, "Taiwan hsin-tien-ying te lai-lu yü ch'ü-lu" (The Origin and Future of Taiwanese New Cinema) in *Taiwan hsin-tien-ying* (Taiwanese New Cinema), ed. Chiao Hsiung-p'ing (Taipei: Shih-pao wen-hua, 1990), pp. 37-38.

<sup>11</sup>. See Chu T'ien-wen's essay "Wo-men te An-an", *TYHSC*, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

Yet, in Chu's own mind, she had not abandoned her Three-Three ideas, considering that a good film, like good prose could surpass simple enjoyment and generate in the audience a lasting positive feeling towards life:

This world is imperfect and sick, but why doesn't the writer act like a Goddess who spreads flowers, and take the responsibility of making this large sick room into a temple of creation. . . .<sup>13</sup>

Chu T'ien-wen believed that, in her work with the director Hou, she was fulfilling her mission to create serious writing, and that her contribution continued the propagation of her ideal of the *shih*, just as she had when the Three-Three group was active. She hoped that the team would "work for the future of Chinese film."<sup>14</sup>

By 1983, Chu T'ien-wen's ambition was still to educate the nation's young elite, which because of the campus romance appeal of her stories, had been more of a slogan than an achievable target. But, with her move into the film industry she focused on a more practical aim. To work successfully in film, she would have to work as part of a team of people from different social backgrounds. Furthermore, since films are usually made for the general public, her writing would have to be designed to appeal to a general audience, and not for the education of an intellectual elite. Her success in helping to produce "good" films, which could be commercially viable, is evidenced by the enthusiastic reception the films received. During 1982-1989, Hou's team produced eight films, almost every one winning national or international prizes.

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<sup>13</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

However, from 1984, Taiwan's films had been in competition against mainland Chinese films at various film festivals. In 1986, at an international festival held in New York, the Taiwan family drama, *Summer at Grandpa's* suffered by comparison with the politically oriented mainland Chinese film *Yellow Earth*, causing Chu to react strongly:

Because we grew up in Taiwan, we immediately felt strongly that Taiwan could not afford to lose the artistic battle with mainland China. Such feelings may not be felt by people from the mainland, Hong Kong or by overseas Chinese. . . but to us, it was very personal.<sup>15</sup>

This is the first sign of Chu identifying herself with Taiwan rather than the motherland. It adds a reassuring personal touch to our picture of a refined, intellectual aspirant *shih* that the challenge to her intellectual and professional competence led to such a rapid re-adjustment of her loyalties.

The extent of Chu T'ien-wen's involvement with the nativistic interpretation of Taiwanese society and culture can be seen through the film stories she wrote. Chu T'ien-wen's *Film Stories* (Chu T'ien-wen tien-ying hsiao-shuo chi, 1990) consists of six stories from the period 1982-1987. The first four stories were original prose, later converted into film scripts; the last two stories were originally written in script form and converted by her into prose for this volume. Obviously, the film versions of all six represent the final result of a team effort, especially that of the director. However, since she revised those stories for publication, the prose versions of all six can equally be credited solely to Chu, and discussed as representing her views. Although Chu's other film scripts

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<sup>15</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen and Wu Nien-chen, *LLFC*, p. 13.

(chü-pen) published after this collection are better known internationally;<sup>16</sup> since they were not published as her own works, it is hard to claim them solely for her, although her contribution would have been considerable. Chu would have more control of her film stories when published as her own written work. The last film story in this collection "Daughter of the Nile" (Ni-luo ho nü-erh) was also published in Chu's next collection of short stories *Splendour of the End of the Century*, 1990.

The film stories are discussed below in chronological order. It is noteworthy that, with the exception of an "Independent Woman," the plots and characterisations I shall discuss show a steady progression from the traditional mainland morality of "The Story of Hsiao-Pi," through the Taiwanese influence of "Summer at Grandpa's," the problems of teenagers coming to adulthood in an expanding city in "Boys from Fengkuei," the dysfunctional city family of "A Time to Live and A Time to Die," and finally, the alienated young woman of "Daughter of the Nile." The striking progression of increasing somberness in the stories, is probably due to her increasing concern at the effects of modernisation and Nativism combined on Taiwan society. "The Most Memorable Season" was written to a commercial brief, and, probably for that reason does not fit this pattern of development.

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, *Pei-ch'ing ch'eng-shih* (City of Sadness 1989) won The Golden Lion at Venice Film Festival (1989), becoming the first Chinese film to capture this prestigious award.

### 3.2 Inter-Marriage

In "The Story of Hsiao-Pi," Chu, for the first time, moved closer to social realism in her treatment of a story. It is about a young boy's coming of age, as narrated by a young girl who lives next door to him in a civil service community.

The three characters, Mother Pi, Father Pi and Hsiao-Pi are used to present problems arising from the plight of a factory girl, the loneliness of an old mainlander and the education system. The content and plot of this, and her other film stories, show that no matter what her level of awareness of social issues was when she graduated, she had rapidly acquired a thorough grasp of social conditions throughout Taiwan.

The story starts with the predicament of Hsiao-Pi's mother. She is a young worker who has an affair with her boss in the factory, and bears him a child, Hsiao-Pi. But the boss being married feels that he cannot marry her. Ashamed, she leaves the factory, and in order to earn money to raise Hsiao-Pi, becomes a taxi dancer in a night club. Next, in order to get security for herself and Hsiao-Pi, she marries a mainlander twenty years older than herself. Such a marriage contrasts sharply with the idyllic unions of Chu T'ien-wen's early stories, which do not feature in her work from now on.

Hsiao-Pi's stepfather is a soldier who has no relatives in China or Taiwan, and he is very pleased to have the chance to make a new family. The couple live in one of the civil service communities, and Hsiao-Pi's mother gives birth to two more boys. However, their married life is fraught with difficulties for both sides. In this story, Chu also explored the differences between the generations within mainlander families. She showed the difficulties for the married couple of sharing feelings and exchanging ideas. Their lack of conversation is not just due to the difference in age between them. There is also a serious language problem. The

working class Taiwanese wife cannot speak Mandarin, and the mainlander can speak no Taiwanese:

The way Mother Pi speaks her Mandarin is indeed laborious. It is not that her Mandarin has an accent or is non-standard, in fact, the pronunciation is very correct. There are two reasons, one, Mother Pi's mandarin is directly translated from Taiwanese, so she speaks slower than other people. The other, to tell the truth is that Mother Pi seldom speaks, so that she will gradually loses her ability to speak language (at all), won't she?<sup>17</sup>

In the story, through the tolerant kindness of both sides, the barrier is conquered on a day to day basis:

Mother Pi talks to her children in Taiwanese, and Father Pi somehow understands. For instance, at dinner time, she says to the children, 'Your shoes are worn out, buy a new pair at New Year.' That Sunday, Father Pi would take the children to the shop in the city to buy shoes.<sup>18</sup>

Hsiao-Pi's mother takes great care of Hsiao-Pi, everyday she takes a lunch box to him at school, and if it rains, she brings a raincoat as well. Nevertheless, Hsiao-Pi does not appreciate his mother's love. Over the years Hsiao-Pi grows into a badly behaved adolescent, hanging out on campus and making trouble. On one occasion, Hsiao-Pi steals the money meant for his tuition fees, and spends it with his friends. When Hsiao-Pi's step-father finds out and questions

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17. "Hsiao-Pi te ku-shih" (The Story of Hsiao-Pi), *TYHSC*, p. 15.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

him, Hsiao-Pi challenges his step-father's authority over him, because he is not his biological father. In his rebellious attitude, Hsiao-Pi ignores his mother's and his step-father's feelings.

Very soon after Hsiao-Pi challenges his step-father, disaster occurs. Hsiao-Pi's mother being bitterly disappointed in her son's behaviour, and feeling that all her efforts have been fruitless, commits suicide leaving a letter to Hsiao-Pi, asking him to respect his step-father.

Through the story of Hsiao-Pi's mother, Chu showed the problems of a vulnerable factory girl, her first innocent love and the disgrace of bearing a child before marriage. She is described as thinking seriously about her life:

Sometimes, after collecting the laundry Mother Pi stands at the front door, watching father (Pi) and (her) youngest son play, her calm face just looks and looks, so long and so concentrated, I wonder whether she is just day dreaming. Usually, Hsiao-Pi is still playing around outside the house at this time.<sup>19</sup>

Mother Pi is depicted as a martyr-like character. Chu's narrator comments on her with gentleness:

In fact, in this world, what sort of love affair is not imperfect? She wanted it to be impeccable, so she would rather break the precious jade, but, was there no other way?<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

The story suggests that Hsiao-Pi's mother kills herself out of guilt and despair at her failure to bring up Hsiao-Pi properly.

The description above of Mother Pi is an ornate passage to use in the story of a good but ordinary woman. Probably Chu had in mind the heroine in *The Dream of Red Chamber*, Lin Tai-yü, who died of an unfulfilled love. Chu in her essay on the *The Dream of Red Chamber* more than once expressed admiration for Lin: "Lin Tai-yü at the famous flower burial scene. . . so fierce, filled with lighting and thunder, as cherry in full blossom, and then falling, she is so passionate even heaven cannot do anything for her."<sup>21</sup>

Chu's views on the education system were reflected in the gulf depicted between Hsiao-Pi and the school authorities. To the authorities, he is a troublemaker stealing books and generally causing mischief. But he is shown as having a positive side to his character in the way he protects the narrator, his female neighbour in the village, who feels that the school has failed him in not understanding that his misbehaviour is caused by his unstable childhood. We have echoes here of Chu's earlier criticism of the lack of the personal touch in the school system. After his mother's death, Hsiao-Pi realises how much trouble he caused his mother and resolves to reform. He decides to enter military school to cut himself off from his past and to reduce the financial burden on his step-father. Chu's young narrator shows a strong admiration for Hsiao-Pi's action: "He is still young, and having the whole world in front of him, he wants to have an absolutely new beginning."<sup>22</sup> Chu's use of Army service as a way to redemption has obvious roots in the military connections of her family.

If we compare her first film script with the immediately previous work, we can see that Chu was already modifying her uncritical acceptance of mainlander

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21. Chu T'ien-wen, "An tzu hsi jen pi hua ti", *HPTKS*, p. 146.

22. "Hsiao-Pi te ku-shih", *TYHSC*, p. 20.



thinking by depicting positively some aspects of the local Taiwanese way of life. The mainlander is shown as seeing the merits of adapting to the local Taiwanese ways of life, and starts a small grocery store. At the end of the story, Chu showed that after he retires, Father Pi becomes one of thousands of small business entrepreneurs: "His father's grocery store expands and joins a chain store 'The Youth Store', and has three or four people to take care of buying and selling, Father Pi is happy to be boss at hand."<sup>23</sup>

### 3.3 Traditional Country Life

Influenced by the autobiographical approach of the New Cinema, Chu used her own childhood experiences in writing her first rural Nativist film story "A Summer at Grandpa's" (An-an te chia-ch'i, 1984). Her mother's Hakka hometown, Miao-li provided the setting for a warm portrayal of the natural cycle of life and death in an extended family in the countryside. The story is told through the weekly letters home to his mother of a twelve year old boy staying with his grandparents. Chu's stories have been described by William Tay as stories of "initiation," conveying a "sense of (the) developing personalities of the protagonists" and which "incorporate the initiation theme into their plots as a feature of the maturing process."<sup>24</sup> In this film story, the playful children presented in Hou and Ch'en's earlier films are given a deeper characterisation by

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<sup>23</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup>. See William Tay, "The Ideology of Initiation: The Films of Hou Hsiao-Hsien," in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identifies, Politics*, eds., Nick Browne and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 151, 152.

this introduction by Chu of the "initiation" theme which shows the children having a developing sensitivity to the nuances of adult life.

When the story starts, An-an has just finished primary school in Taipei. His father, a busy engineer in the city with a pregnant wife cannot cope with looking after An-an and his sister, so the two children are sent off to spend the summer with their grandparents in the countryside. Their initiation into adult ways starts with the journey. When their uncle comes with his girl friend to take them to their grandparents' house, the children are immediately surprised by the unthinking and inconsiderate behaviour of the pair. To their surprise, the girl friend even casually drops rubbish on the floor of the train.

Staying with his grandparents, An-an has a wonderful time in the open air, swimming in the river, playing with turtles with the other kids, and generally enjoying life in the wild, green country scenery. He gets a taste of a traditional upbringing, with different habits in everything, ranging from table manners to how to talk to people. An-an's grandfather is a doctor, whose house is "like a faded, yellow old photo." Everything about his old fashioned customs is different from the younger generation's ways. But, An-an respects his grandfather, sensing his authority, an "invisible thing which cannot be touched" but which has a palpable feel to it -- his grandfather's calligraphy desk and the rooms of the medical practice are "places where children are not allowed to trespass."<sup>25</sup>

There is conflict between An-an's uncle and the doctor. The uncle disappoints his father by having an affair with a working woman. When he marries the girl and leaves the family home without notice, the sense of the decay of the family patriarchy becomes explicit. But, when the old man softens his

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<sup>25</sup>. "An-an te chia-ch'i (Summer at Grandpa's), *TYHSC*, p. 86.

attitude and visits his son in his new home, An-an's uncle is surprised that his father should make the first move towards a reconciliation.

Chu is skilful in evoking the strong sentiments that link the family in spite of the frequent scoldings. The love of the parents for their children is suggested by gestures, casual remarks and the empathy shown to exist between them. An-an's uncle's regret at differing with his father is a testimony to his sincerity and the strength of his feelings for his family. The relationship is suggested with some subtlety, An-an's uncle "does not know whether to invite his father into the house, and asks (his bride) to come out. Grandfather waves his hand as if to say, it is all right, or good-bye, or, well, you go on as you will. He turns back."<sup>26</sup> When the bride comes out from the house, we are told that she sees her husband "squatting next to the field, he may be just thinking, (or) just looking at cauliflowers, but at that moment, she dares not disturb him and also squats quietly on the side."<sup>27</sup> While the authority of the patriarch is challenged in this story, the challenge takes place in the context of a warm and sincere relationship, and not as a rebellion against a cold and unfeeling domination; in fact, any rebellion is shown as much by inner thought as by overt objection to paternal authority.

While showing the tranquillity of country life, Chu T'ien-wen does not romanticise rural life, and An-an learns that crime is not confined to the big city when he sees a robber hitting his victim with a stone. She depicts change in the village through the two children who notice new signs of industrialisation since previous visits.

However, the core relationships among the members of the village community are unaffected by changes and the passing of time. An-an's

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<sup>26</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>27</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

grandfather, the doctor, does not always charge a fee, and often supports his patients in rebuilding their lives after some personal disaster. There are strong bonds of sympathy and respect between the doctor and his patients. Chu paints a picture of a rural society that graphically records the pressures from which it suffers as society changes, and emphasises the responsibility that the higher classes feel to maintain social harmony. If there is a hint of nostalgia in her description of a rural community, it is because of the autobiographical nature of much of her material. The preservation of the idealised values of old Taiwan that still nourished the community as it gradually absorbed a new modern life, provides an optimistic view of change, which is in complete contrast with what we might have expected from the teenage Chu T'ien-wen. The next story is a natural progression from this one, and follows the protagonists from the village to coping with life in the city, and shows how the values of village life can still provide reassurance.

### **3.4 Initiation into the City**

The boys in "The Boys from Fengkuei" (Fengkuei lai te jen, 1983) are village youths who, finding life in a small village restricting, move to the big city. The story starts on Penghu, a small, scenic island off Taiwan. The main protagonist, A-ch'ing's home is in a village with clear views of the sea. But, as we might expect of an adolescent, the natural beauty of his surroundings does not impress him, and on a clear bright afternoon he is restless and bored to death, as he has nothing to do except hanging around or riding a motorcycle with his friends.

His parents seem to him to be stuck in an unchanging rut of routine which makes him want to "escape from their old and dark house"<sup>28</sup> When he goes to the cinema, the building is broken down, with "light coming through the hole in the roof and reflecting off the dust in the air" just like his depressing home.<sup>29</sup> The films shown are out-of-date "grandmother's films," and watching them, "he feels his life is little by little, trickle (drip) by trickle, drifting away from the arms he opens like the character "ta," like a muddy river, flowing, flowing, flowing, unceasingly flowing past, he will finally erode away and die."<sup>30</sup> The boredom of his life makes him feel that "he would like to fight someone."<sup>31</sup>

His friends share his feelings. Sometimes, when they are in a good mood, they dive for clams and sell them to the seafood restaurant, or search for beautiful coral to sell to tourists. With the money they earn, they gamble. This eventually leads to the incident which makes him decide to leave the island for the city. He and his friends get involved in fighting with the petty gangsters from whom he has won some money, and he gets in trouble with the authorities. His mother becomes very angry with him, and so, fed-up and ashamed, he and two friends, A-jung and Kuo Tzu decide to go the city, Kaohsiung.

Although they have relatives and friends from their village to help them find a place to live and a job in an electronics factory, it is still difficult to adjust. They find the city strange and frightening. The rush hour traffic looks like a disorderly "field of cars," and at night "tongues of flame" leap up from "the oil refinery" as though they are "licking the sky."<sup>32</sup> In the city even acts of kindness can be misunderstood. When the friends go to help a man injured in a

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28. "Fengkuei lai te jen" (The Boys from Fengkuei), *TYHSC*, p. 41.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 43. The character "ta" means "big" in Chinese.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

car accident, the man's relatives assume that the young men have caused the accident-- why else would they want to help?

Next Chu shows how the friends' lives in Kaohsiung begin to diverge. While A-ch'ing studies Japanese in his leisure time, his friends get involved in the night life-- chasing factory girls and hanging out with friends of doubtful character. A village friend, A-ho, who had come to the city earlier, gets in trouble with the police, and decides to get away by working as a sailor. But he has been living with his girl friend, Hsiao-hsing, and does not know that she has become pregnant. At the time of the story, this would be considered morally reprehensible, and so Hsiao-hsing, who wants to be independent, determines to have an abortion.

A-ch'ing is attracted to Hsiao-hsing and they become friendly, he accompanies her on the visit to the abortionist, and when he needs to go to his village for his father's funeral, Hsiao-hsing goes with him. On their return from the small island, A-ch'ing feels vulnerable living in the city, and seems to have lost a sense of direction in his life, and Hsiao-hsing decides to work in Taipei and to end her relationship with A-ho. However, the trip back to the village serves to introduce Chu's contrapuntal theme of the security provided to A-ch'ing by his village roots. Although he is uncertain in his life in the city, when he went home, his family and the people of the village welcomed him. Everybody invited him to stop for a cup of tea and a chat. Having this foundation as his spiritual support, even though he is now apart from them, living in the city, he can depend on a firm relationship with his home and village to provide him with a sense of identity, and encourage him to take a more positive attitude towards life.

The final episode describes the boys sitting on the banks of the city river recalling their happy times on their island swimming in the sea. Attempting to repeat that experience, they run into the river and swim together, talking about

their dreams of getting married and having children. Although they find relief from their fears in swimming, nonetheless, a feeling of uncertainty about their future lingers: "The beach is extended into the unknowable distance, in the same way, they do not know what direction they will take."<sup>33</sup>

The majority of the rural people who go to work in the city are dedicated to sending money back to their rural homes, even at the expense of a comfortable life for themselves. For instance, A-jung's sister, a backing dancer with a band, sends money to help to build an extension to her family's house, and always takes gifts home on national holidays. Because of this, she is not well off. When A-jung and A-ch'ing first show up in Kaohsiung to see her, she is eating a bowl of cheap instant noodles.

Chu's portrayal is in accord with most Nativist's descriptions of the harsh life of working class people. In his poem *Export Processing Zone*, written in 1979, Li Ch'ang-hsien similarly explores the financial burden borne by female factory workers.<sup>34</sup> Most Nativist writers hoped their writing would contribute towards making an improvement in the working classes' material conditions; in descriptions of working class people, they would emphasise the worker's primitive living conditions. For example, two stories from the novelist Yang Ch'ing-ch'u's collection *Factory People* (Kung-ch'ang jen, 1975) explore the problems of factory workers.<sup>35</sup> In "Low Class People" (Ti-teng jen) Yang discusses the conditions of the temporary workers, and tells of one man who had worked in a factory for thirty years, still considered temporary by his company. He has no housing benefits, no bonus, no insurance, and no pension, he is not

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<sup>33</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>34</sup>. See P'eng Jui-chin's analysis, *Taiwan wen-hsüeh t'an so* (The Search of Taiwanese Literature) (Taipei: Ch'ien-wei ch'u-pan-she, 1995), p. 167.

<sup>35</sup>. See Kao T'ien-sheng, *Taiwan hsiao-shuo yü hsiao-shuo chia* (Novels and Novelists from Taiwan) (Taipei: Ch'ien-wei chu-pan-she, 1994), p. 163.

even allowed to take the company bus. When he is notified that he is going to be fired, he throws himself in front of the manager's car, hoping his death will get some money for his elderly father. This is one of many stories in which Yang exposes the ruthless exploitation of workers. In another story, "Factory People" Yang promotes the idea of democratic self-governing workers' organisations. During the 1970s the head of the worker's organisation was often the factory boss, with the result that the organisation did not protect its members rights.

As Chu moved towards the nativist position, portraying workers sympathetically, her workers too live in dilapidated and rundown conditions. They have to rely on their dreams, and study in off duty hours, to further their search for a better life. But, it is important to note that her sympathy does not extend to putting forward actual or potential social measures to relieve their lot. A passage taken from the "Boys" shows a group of young men looking at Hsiao-hsing's handkerchief, in which the rainbow colours of the handkerchief symbolise not only the young men's sexual awakening, but also a romantic ideal world:

Hsiao-hsing also works in the factory. Every morning they have to take the ferry from Chi-chin to the city, most of the time, when they leave home, Hsiao-hsing and Chin-ho (A-ho) have already gone to work. As they went downstairs, they always see a lonely handkerchief hanging on the drying frame on the balcony, sometimes it looks apple green, goose yellow, water blue, or eggplant purple like a square dream, swinging in the hallway draught, waving to people.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>. "Fengkuei lai te jen", *TYHSC*, p. 53.



Chu's young men are lonely and lack social position, and their dreams are somewhat unreal and sentimental. On the other hand, while Yang too is sympathetic, he focuses on the power struggle in the workplace. It must be said that Chu is rather paternalistic in her attitude to the workers, there is no suggestion that her workers will rebel against the status quo; whereas Yang's workers are more confrontational to the management.

Because Chu is a strong believer in tradition, in her portrayal of immigrants to the city, villagers such as A-ch'ing are shown as morally innocent and caring. For instance, the scenes of young men playing around or fighting which usually feature in Chu's stories about adolescents, are depicted as play or the result of a sudden burst of temper, rather like animal cubs, symbolising a growing sense of freedom and strength. Often there is no definite conclusion, the fight just fades away. When there is a serious fight the participants escape to the sea to purify themselves in the pure water and cleanse their "filthy, emotionally exhausted bodies":

Inch by inch the sunset eats up the beach. Finally, it becomes dark as the sun sinks into the ocean, the sand blows in the wind, and the delicate, clear evening breeze makes people feel very, very tired, wanting to abandon their foul and heavy bags of skin and let the tide carry themselves away. . . .<sup>37</sup>

However, this is not a story of crime and punishment, these young men do not have to end up under arrest in order to accept their faults, the cleansing of their bodies in the sea symbolises the sense of moral awareness.

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<sup>37</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

The treatment of "The Boys from Fengkuei" is more experimental than the first two film stories discussed, with much more lingering reflection on the protagonist's feelings of boredom and waste of time. Instead of conventional plot development, the story jumps from episode to episode without linking passages, in a way more reminiscent of film techniques.

Chu's change in attitude from her Three-Three days is evident enough in her acceptance of the couple who choose to live in "sin," and her sympathy for the girl who chooses to have an abortion rather than remain in a restrictive relationship. Unlike Mother Pi in "The Story of Hsiao-Pi," Hsiao-hsing is more independent and is willing to be pro-active in working out her own life.

In "Boys from Fengkuei," Chu depicted the transition from adolescence to adulthood, the insecurity and perils of venturing from the (unappreciated) security of the parents' house into a world which is usually indifferent and often hostile, a transition which is sometimes cushioned by the knowledge that home is still there behind them.

### **3.5 An Independent Woman**

Even though the film "Boys from Fengkuei" was innovative, it did not attract as much public attention as the earlier films. It did, however, get a better critical reception. After its relative lack of commercial success, Chu was asked to write a comedy in the hope of getting a wider audience. The result was "The Most Memorable Season" (Tsui hsiang-nien te chi-chieh, 1983). The story focuses on an unmarried female journalist who attempts to find a temporary father for her as yet unborn child by her married boss. After asking many friends, she finally finds a man who is willing to get married, and then divorce her

once the child is born. However, despite the fact that the female protagonist suffers a miscarriage, the couple decide to stay together and the plan is abandoned.

With its somewhat exaggerated and melodramatic plot, the story is a vivid portrayal of the emancipation of a middle class woman seeking freedom and independence in making a life for herself in Taipei. Once married she does not behave like the typical middle-class wife of a typical middle-class husband. Instead of getting involved in "nest building" and saving money, she spends all her money shopping and travelling abroad. She has made the positive choice to bring up the child herself and lead an independent life.

Given the conservative mores of Taipei of that time, this action would be considered "wild," but with the modification in Chu's own views, we can see that she is portrayed as a "redemptive" character. The protagonist's miscarriage vitiated her original plan to become an independent single mother. However, the requirement for a happy ending to a comedy dictates that the couple should remain together after her miscarriage. The ending also accords with Chu's idealisation of love and marriage in her early short stories. Although Chu's attitude as expressed in the story is fairly liberal, the story itself is light-weight compared with the serious social themes of the other stories in this collection.

### 3. 6 Three Generations

Chu wrote that the works of an author reflect their concerns or the problems of their time:

Superficially, the history of China in the last fifty years has been distorted by intellectuals interfering in politics. The result of this has been to produce works that are filled with cheap sloganising and utterly obvious political messages. In a deeper sense, every mature adult who has had profound experience of life can understand the implications of works of literature. Reading Lu Hsün's stories evokes the depressed and gloomy times of which he wrote; reading Shen Ts'ung-wen's stories conjures up the atmosphere of the verdant countryside; or like Chang Ai-ling's writing . . . so tender that most people think she was merely writing love stories.<sup>38</sup>

In her film stories she portrays immature young adults in the course of defining their relationships with their families and society.

The story "A Time to Live and a Time to Die" (T'ung-nien wang-shih, 1985) features a mainlander's family, focusing on the protagonist's experience of growing up in a Taiwanese village, and the deaths of his family members.

When the protagonist is about to enter junior high school, the family experiences the first of a series of deaths. His father, who has been ill for some time, dies suddenly, and, to the protagonist, unexpectedly. It is only then that he learns from relatives and neighbours about his father's life, and how respected he had been for his service as a senior civil servant.

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<sup>38</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, *LLFC*, p. 18.

The story links actual historical incidents in with the family's experiences. A cousin of the protagonist is killed in the "August the Twenty-Third" incident in 1958, a battle that took place on Kinmen (Quemoy), a small island between Taiwan and mainland China. The death of Vice-President Chen Cheng is linked with the protagonist's memory of his father:

Outside the window on the playground, the flag at half mast is still fluttering in the wind. He somehow thinks of what the newspaper said about the Vice-President, that he was very frugal, and that when he died, he was buried with only a walking stick and his woollen hat. He feels that this is like his own father who died many years ago.<sup>39</sup>

During his time at high school, his mother becomes the second family member in the story to die. She develops a cancerous growth, and his sister comes home to look after her while he continues to hang out on the street with his friends. At the very time of his mother's death, he is involved in a street fight. Very soon after his mother dies, he begins to appreciate the key role his mother had played in holding the family together.

The protagonist in late puberty at the time of "A Time to Live and A Time to Die" thinks that his life is purposeless, "feeling desolate he wants to sink to the bottom as well as fly up to the sky."<sup>40</sup> But after his friend, Chang dies in a gang fight, he begins to understand that: "he too could die like Chang, or even younger, or even that no one would know about his death, he would just disappear. Yet, he does not know what kind of fate impels him to be alive today,

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<sup>39</sup>. "T'ung-nien wang-shih" (A Time to Live and a Time to Die), *TYHSC*, p. 142.

<sup>40</sup>. "T'ung-nien wang-shih", *TYHSC*, p. 157.

like the wind follows clouds, the shadow follows the shape, the flowers and tress grow silently and the river quietly flows on its own."<sup>41</sup>

The story implies that the protagonist has intimations of a sublime, unknowable and unpredictable universe. The imagery suggests that he is in the grip of his fate and that there is a possibility of redemption. While such philosophising is typical of adolescence, the form it takes is due to Chu's own beliefs. By the way in which Chu depicted death, she conveyed the wish to escape from the "vale of tears" that is the real world into a sacred, sublime happiness which is the Christian view of the next.

While reading some autobiographical notes that his father had written, the children began to realise that their parents had an unrealised dream of returning to their hometown. As far as their father was concerned, the stay in Taiwan was to be only temporary -- for instance, he bought only easy-to-dispose-of bamboo furniture. While he was ill, his reflections on the past seemed to be filled with regret of separation from his family in China: "His life passed in a few seconds in his mind, outside the wall, the phoenix tree is burning in the blue sky, its rice-like sprout-yellow leaves falling down on their own like a shower of yellow rain."<sup>42</sup>

Although this story was ostensibly based on Hou's autobiography, it also reflected Chu's changing ideas. In an autobiographical essay written in 1983 she revealed that she too had felt differently from her father, thus signalling a definite change in the direction of her thinking:

Father had never thought about buying a house, he had a very sound reason: 'Why should we buy a house? Were we going to settle down here

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<sup>41</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>42</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

and not to want to go back?' 'Go back' means return to China. Even I felt that his loyalty was naive.<sup>43</sup>

Chu T'ien-wen and her generation, like the protagonist, were born in Taiwan and Taiwan is home to them. The atmosphere, in Taiwan at this time of rapid economic expansion and social change, was such that only the most diehard could continue to subscribe unquestioningly to the KMT dogma of the return to the mainland by invasion -- many sought to argue for a "softer landing" in the form of trade, cultural or educational interchange but the use of force rapidly became a shibboleth.

As I have illustrated above, Chu never has her country people re-create the internal oppression often depicted as part of the traditional Chinese extended family. The family relationships are based on love and mutual caring, the grandmother in this story only sometimes exerts the authority which she would certainly have wielded in the old society, and gradually loses her capacity to exert her authority.

Unlike the "Summer at Grandpa's" where the older generation like An-an's grandfather, retains a certain degree of authority. In "A Time to Live and A Time to Die," the old generation become incapacitated and vulnerable as they face inevitable natural decay. The grandmother is seen as a "dry little woman," and "when she laughs, she makes no sound, but displays a mouth without teeth."<sup>44</sup> She has become confused, and living as she does in the past, often bundles up her clothes to "go home."

The third death in the family is the death of the grandmother. Although the four brothers were living in the same house, they did not take any care of the

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<sup>43</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, "Chia, shih yung kao-chih hu ch'i lai te", *HPTKS*, p. 100.

<sup>44</sup>. "T'ung-nien wang-shih", *TYHSC*, p. 146.

old lady. In fact, after she died, her body lay undiscovered for some time, so that it was foul smelling and "crawling with ants"<sup>45</sup>:

A monk comes to bless and collect grandmother's body. . . The monk glances severely over his shoulder at them. What truly unfilial children. His eyes scold them this way. After all, it had never occurred to grandmother, father and mother, or other people that they would die in this place -- the most southern earth of China, and that their children would grow up and have their roots here.<sup>46</sup>

This passage illustrates that with the passing of time, the dream of returning to mainland China has become less and less real to the immigrants and their children. The experience of death in the family is generalised beyond a personal emotion into a sense of the passing of a generation, becoming a memory of a race, as Ch'en Kuo-fu has pointed out: "When the protagonist and his three brothers face the death of the grandmother, it is as if a whole young generation witnesses the passing of the old generation."<sup>47</sup>

Even though the protagonist does not share his father's wish to return to mainland China, after reading his father's autobiographical note, the young protagonist does feel compassion for his parents' past suffering. The protagonist expresses a sympathetic view of his grandmother:

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<sup>45</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>46</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>47</sup>. Ch'en Fei-pao, *Taiwan Tien-ying shih-hua* (History of Taiwanese Films) (Peking: Chung-kuo tien-ying ch'u-pan-she, 1988), p. 359.



Until now, A-ha-ku (the protagonist) still frequently thinks about the road to mainland China which his grandmother thought she was taking, he was probably the only one who had walked with his grandmother. Also, (he vividly recalls) one afternoon, when he and grandmother had picked many guavas.<sup>48</sup>

This story records the gradual dissolution of the bond between the mainlanders and their motherland. It depicts with warm human feeling, but not blind nostalgia, how, over three generations, the reality of their situation comes home to the family. As Li Tao-ming points out, by describing the differences between the three generations of a family which had moved from the mainland in 1947, the story created a new angle from which to view the history and politics of Taiwan.<sup>49</sup> This judgement reflects the critical success of the film when it was released.<sup>50</sup> For instance, it was highly praised by the film director Yang Tsch'ang as "the best film in the thirty year history of the Taiwanese cinema."<sup>51</sup>

The story contributed to a growing debate by breaking the taboo on the mention of the possibility of a formal separation from mainland China, and asserting a specifically Taiwanese national identity. In the event, two years after this film was made, President Chiang Ching-kuo began the re-establishment of communication with mainland China by allowing old people to visit relatives on the mainland.

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48. "T'ung-nien wang-shih", *TYHSC*, pp. 163-164.

49. See Ch'en Fei-pao, *Taiwan Tien-ying shih-hua*, p. 356.

50. The film was another triumph, following "The Story of Hsiao-Pi," as it won the "Best Film" Award and Chu won the "Best Original Script" Award in the Golden Horse Film Festival of 1985.

51. Quoted from Ch'en Fei-pao, *Taiwan Tien-ying shih-hua*, p. 356.

At the end of "A Time to Live and a Time to Die," Chu's young mainlanders have virtually completed sloughing off any mental identification with the mainland inherited from their parents. In the next film story, the last of this series, we take the final step to an entirely Taiwanese identity.

### 3. 7 The New Urban Taiwanese

It is difficult to underestimate the rapidity and extent of the increase in wealth and homogeneity of Taipei since the mid-1980s. Taipei has not only become an urban sprawl, but has done so much more quickly than other similar mainland Chinese cities like Kuangchow or Shanghai. This economic development has been reflected in Taiwanese cinema, as Fredric Jameson has pointed out:

The Taiwan new wave has tended to mark its images as specific to the island, in ways quite distinct from the mainland evocation of landscape. The city is also focused differently here. . . , for the obvious reasons that Taipei does not possess the profile or the historical resonance and associations of the great traditional mainland cities. . . . Still, its dominance has effectively transformed the natural countryside into a kind of extended suburban space, one in which the survival of more traditional agricultural villages is nonetheless sublimated and somehow modified by their linked association in an intricate web of electric trains that lead into the capital.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Remapping Taipei," in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, ed. Nick Browne and others. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 122.

During this time, in the late 1980s, the Nativistic approach of the Taiwanese New Cinema began to shift from the depiction of the old Taiwan, to that of a new high-speed life in Taipei. For instance, Yang Te-ch'ang's *Terroriser* (K'ung-pu fen-tzu, 1986), which tells the story of a young woman who achieves independence when her husband leaves her, stands out starkly as sharing none of the sentimentalism of the early Nativist Films, which in evoking the crisis of family relationships in modern Taipei.

Chu herself dealt with this development in her story "Daughter of the Nile" (1989), which is about young people who have lost all contact with both the Taiwan countryside and mainlander traditions. They have become city people having more in common with Western city dwellers than other Taiwanese.

The story shows the rapidly increasing pace of city life and illustrates the disordered state of family relationships by focusing on the life of a twenty year old woman, Lin Hsiao-yang. She lives in a dysfunctional family, consisting of herself, her sick mother, her father, who is a secret policeman and is often out at work, and two brothers, who are members of a teenage gang.

The spacious and relaxed atmosphere of the countryside has no place in this story in which Chu describes the extreme limitation on living space in the city. The school where Hsiao-yang studies part-time is closely surrounded by blocks of flats, and students are distracted easily by what the residents are doing in their homes. There is one episode in which the whole class watches, while only a few yards away, a girl comes out on to her balcony to try to light the water boiler. She can not light it, so the whole class shouts out of the classroom windows "Press and turn" -- the instruction on the ignition button. Contrariwise, when the principal addresses the school over the loud speaker, he can be heard clearly in every home in the vicinity.

Those familiar with Chu's work will not be surprised that the education system of the protagonist's school is questioned by Chu as not fostering a fruitful teacher/student relationship. The school system and authorities are depicted as mechanistic and ineffective in providing both formal and moral education. Her teacher is unconventional in style, and suspected by the authorities of being a political activist. If there is any hint of politics in his teaching he is reprimanded. But, paradoxically, the 'advanced' politics that the school authorities think are so dangerous, and are determined to suppress, have no meaning for his pupils the new generation, for whom politics have nothing to do with their life in the city. Hsiao-yang says:

One day, he (the teacher) came to class saying that someone had gone to the discipline office to report him, accusing him of spreading thoughts of yellow, red and black. But these are already out of date, what is fashionable now is green, understand!<sup>53</sup>

In contemporary Chinese usage, the colours of "yellow," "red" and "black" are metaphors for sex, Communism and depression. By introducing "green" for environmental issues, the protagonist satirises the teacher as being out of date and the politics of Taiwan as irrelevant.

Their irreverent attitude is also reflected in the way they use sexual jokes as a metaphor for the world. For instance, as they compare women from the six Continents: "The women from fourteen to eighteen-years-old are like Africa, half undeveloped, virgin territory, half explored. . . ."<sup>54</sup>

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53. "Ni-luo ho nü-erh" (Daughter of the Nile), *TYHSC*, p. 173.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

City people are shown as so driven by the desire for a better material life, that it often results in the breakdown of a family, or stress caused by financial pressure. The broken home is exemplified by the mainlander father of Hsiao-yang's friend A-shan, who makes a bad investment in the eel business and loses all his money, destroying family harmony. As the protagonist says: "His parents often fight, it can be very violent; the next morning, his mother's face has ointment on, and his father also finds a plaster to stick on his chin to pretend that he is the one who has been hit."<sup>55</sup>

The effect of financial stress is illustrated by the protagonist's uncle who owns a factory making optical lenses, and is in a state of hysteria, because of the pressure of keeping his business going. To help him relax, he absurdly plays the part of "the dancing man" (chi-t'ung) during a temple rite.<sup>56</sup>

Gradually we come to feel, as does the protagonist, that her friends and relatives are all in a state of bewilderment. In this situation, she takes refuge in her fantasy life, identifying herself with the people she admires, including Seiko, a Japanese singer she envies. In love with a member of her brother's gang, A-shan, she finds relief from her physical yearning by identifying herself with the heroine of a comic book romance (man-hua) *Daughter of the Nile*, and imagining herself to be in various exotic situations with the object of her desire. For example, she has an elaborate fantasy in which she sees herself as a powerful Egyptian princess, adored by both her lover and her people.

In "Daughter of the Nile," Chu developed further the theme of young adults who are struggling with the pressures of adapting to an adult life in the modern city. Chu also used scenes of fights between young men. Unlike "Boys from Fengkuei" and "A Time to Live and A Time to Die," where the protagonists

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<sup>55</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>56</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

eventually learn to appreciate their families, the female protagonist representing the new generation in "Daughter of the Nile" does not gain any understanding of or sympathy for the past. What we have in this story are the amoral figures of estranged young people who obviously have no systematic values. As Hsiao-yang says: "Little brother says, it is cool to rob."<sup>57</sup>

Having never had a conventional family life, Hsiao-yang has no tender feelings for her family. While sitting on her mother's sickbed, she shows no sadness:

Mother is awake because of her pain. She gets up and bends her body over to vomit and cry. I have already put the needle into the steel pot and boiled it, (then I) put on the headphones of my Walkman to listen to a (radio) program, how wonderful!<sup>58</sup>

She is even more alienated from her mainlander father. Seeing her father cry when a letter arrives announcing the death of her grandmother in China, she looks at her father coldly, thinking: "Eighty-eight years old, she should have died already (she is lucky to have lived so long), why cry?"<sup>59</sup> She continues, saying:

My father is a tragic figure, you know. None of us is on his side, his language is really like the code of another planet, no one understands, I often think, the best ending for him would be to go back to his planet.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>58</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>59</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>60</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

The story shows clearly that the new urban youth has nothing in common with the older generation. The young people portrayed here are unsentimental and constantly searching for material pleasure, even to the extent of risking death while committing crime; the protagonist's elder brother, the only member of her family for whom she has any feeling, is beaten to death by a house-holder while breaking into his house. When the protagonist first hears that her brother may have been killed, she becomes hysterical telephoning her friends to see if they know what actually happened.

At the end of the story, the protagonist is in a state of indifference to her life, saying of herself: "Seiko, Lin Hsiao-yang, both are me, and the story of the Daughter of the Nile are all here."<sup>61</sup> Chu leaves us feeling sorry for this young woman who has no recourse to the support of her family or friends.

"Daughter of the Nile" is the only film story in which Chu uses a first person narrator to relate the whole story. The protagonist's intricate monologue on her family history, her sexual desires, her comic book fantasy lover, her dream about boutiques and clothes, is a mixture of young people's slang idioms and elegant classical expressions, evoking the glamorous, yet superficial characters against the colourful texture of the city. The hectic life of the city is vividly conveyed by the way that the protagonist delivers a constant stream of chat rather than speaking in coherent, sequentially connected sentences.

With this story, Chu completes the transition from the mainlander orientation of her early work, through a neo-nativist approach more in accord with the views of her fellow workers, to write a story that begins to portray the alienation of her later work.

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

### 3.8 Chu's Neo-nativist Aesthetic

Chu T'ien-wen's contribution to the films made by Hou's team has been described by Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang as having "given neo-nativism its eloquent artistic expression."<sup>62</sup> In fact, Chu's approach introduced a modification of the previous rural activist political line of the Nativists by bringing an urban element into the stories, and stressing the protagonists' struggles for self-realisation and success in making a life for themselves.

As has been noted, Chu's earlier fiction had been limited in its dramatic scope to campus love stories. We may suggest, perhaps with the benefit of hindsight, that at that time, because of the all-pervasive KMT intellectual climate in her family and their social circle, she did not have the opportunity to develop a voice of her own. It is certainly hard to image the stylistic bravura of her later work spontaneously developing from the writing of her campus love stories without some outside stimulus.

Chu became very interested in all aspects of film-making. She wrote that in telling a story on film one can "create one's own rules of the game," and "create a lyrical and atmospheric mood."<sup>63</sup> She also said that she, like Hou, disliked a straightforward narration of the story and saw the creative possibilities of flash back and flash forward. She was very impressed by the way film depicted the physical environment of the action, we shall see in her later work that she devoted considerable care to the establishment of the *mise-en-scène*.

It can certainly be asserted that Chu's writing for the film industry represented a definite advance in the sophistication of her plotting, and of her

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<sup>62</sup>. Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, "Chu T'ien-wen and Taiwan's Recent Cultural and Literary Trends", p. 68.

<sup>63</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, *LLFC*, pp. 167-185.



writing techniques which would enable her to tackle the socially and psychologically weighty themes of her next works.

It is safe to say that Chu's co-operation with the Nativist film-makers was beneficial to both sides. When we consider the philosophical and political gulf between them, it is gratifying that their aesthetic alliance turned out so fruitfully both for all concerned, and for the film industry of Taiwan.

## Chapter IV

### Obsession with Sensuality: *Splendour of the End of the Century*

#### 4.1 Returning to the World of Fiction

In 1986, after the completion of the film *A Time to Live and A Time to Die*, Chu T'ien-wen was missing the independence she had known as an author, and returned to writing fiction.<sup>1</sup> In 1989 she published a collection of short stories *The City of Summer Heat* (Yen-hsia chih-tu) containing stories such as "Dream of the World" (Shih-meng) and "The Family under the Peach Tree" (Tao-shu jen-chia you-shih), which are reminiscent of her earlier family and film stories and are not regarded as aesthetically outstanding.

At this point it could be assumed that Chu was about to continue on her previous creative path. However, when her next volume of short stories *Splendour of the End of the Century* (Shih-chi-mo te hua-li, 1990) appeared, it signalled a radical change in direction. For the reason for the change in Chu's writing, I would suggest that we do not need to look further than the political turmoil in Taiwan during the period 1988-1990, when Chu was writing these stories. It was a period when martial law was lifted, political dissidents were released from prison, and, most important to Chu, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) began openly to promote their Taiwan-centred views and the KMT

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<sup>1</sup>. See the preface in Chu T'ien-wen's *Yen-hsia chih-tu* (The City of Summer Heat), *YSCT*, p. 8.

split into two groups.<sup>2</sup> These events were a severe blow to Chu, for whom they were not only a political disaster, but almost a threat to civilised society itself.<sup>3</sup> From this time on, Chu was concerned with the alienating effects of the material society, and the corrupting effects that would result from the abandonment of traditional values.

In her next volume of short stories, Taipei becomes a colourful materialistic world, a sophisticated urban setting for characters of whom she takes a disinterested, non-judgmental view while describing their indulgent lives of sensuality and their frustrations at the restraints on their behaviour. However, these stories have a bleak mood, just because of the dispassionate view of her characters she takes.

The result was that *Splendour of the End of the Century* was the first of her written work to be received with enthusiasm by serious literary critics. The volume consisted of seven stories, which appear in the order of writing: "Master Ch'ai" (Ch'ai shih-fu), "Daughter of the Nile," "Carnal Bodhisattva" (Jou-shen p'u-sa), "Take Me With You, Moonlight" (Tai wo ch'ü pa yüeh-kuang ), "Red Rose Is Paging You" (Hung-mei kui hu-chiao ni),<sup>4</sup> "Splendour of the End of the Century" (Shih-chi-mo te hua-li), "Seeming Like Yesterday" (Huang-ju tso-jih). Reading these stories, we feel that the main character in the volume is the city itself, or rather life in the city, and not the various protagonists who merely exemplify the pleasures and problems of the life in the city. What the

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2. A new KMT Party (Hsin-tang) was later founded in 1993.

3. According to Chu T'ien-wen: "the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) is not a political party, it is the *shih* party, the politics of *shih*. . . which leads the people of the nation." See her essay "Wo ke yüeh p'ai-huai", *HPTKS*, p. 83.

4. The word "paging" here refers not to the American use, typically in hotels and airports, but to the less familiar term heard in citizen's-band radio jargon. CB radio was a fashionable craze in Taiwan in the 1980s.

protagonists have in common is a failure to find peace in themselves -- living in an open society with all its opportunities, paradoxically they feel increasingly isolated. For this reason, I shall not analyse each story separately, but rather draw on the various protagonists for illustrations of the typical effects that Chu foresaw of the strain of city life on her characters.

#### 4.2 The Decay of the Body

Fear of bodily decay is the first effect of city life that we shall discuss. We have only to look at the affluent West to see how ephemeral materialistic control over life is undermined by the fear of death and decay, and the lengths that people will go to stave it off. In the same way, Chu T'ien-wen described the sensual and aesthetic pleasures available through the new freedom of Taipei society while at the same time conveying the inevitable individual tragedy that is the decay of the human body. The city, on the other hand, seems to get younger as old buildings are replaced by new, and the younger generation moves in. City dwellers see their environment changing around them and become more conscious of the passing of time and its physical effects. There is no lack of characters suffering from the fear of ageing in these stories. In "Carnal Bodhisattva" the protagonist is a thirty year old, homosexual artist, Hsiao-T'ung who feels that he is too old for his teenage friends, and polishes his body as though maintaining "his calf leather briefcase."<sup>5</sup> He would like to believe that his youth can be preserved by constant sexual indulgence. In "Splendour of the End of the Century," the young fashion model, Mi-ya, who is twenty-five years

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5. "Jou-shen p'u-sa" (Carnal Bodhisattva), *SCMTHL*, p. 58.

old and feels that life is catching up on her, tries to extend the life of cut flowers by drying them, as an allegory for preserving her own beauty.

The most detailed treatment of this theme by Chu is in the story about Ch'i-kung Master Ch'ai. An immigrant from the mainland forty years ago, he has finally settled in Taipei, and is a widower living with his son's family. Having acquired something of a reputation amongst white-collar city workers for curing ills associated with high pressure business life, he is alone with thoughts of his lost youth and his pipedream of retiring to China. The story begins when one day, at his disciple's house, he meets a young girl who is allergic to the air of Taipei. He is attracted to her and volunteers to treat her. The story then describes how the old master's interest in the girl grows deeper each time the girl comes to see him, and that on the sixth occasion, the old mainlander finds out that the girl has a skin problem, while on the seventh, he persuades her to take some immortal water home. The scene illustrates the physical tension between Master Ch'ai and the young girl, using sentences in which objects can be read as symbols of the Master's old body:

Over the stove is a pot of hot water, Master Ch'ai pours some into a steel cup, then goes to the front of the Buddhist shrine. Using his hand, he draws a charm in the water and comes back to pour some into a (Coca-Cola) bottle, the girl too then takes over the procedure. The water is too hot, and the shape of the bottle becomes distorted, most of the waist collapses, and the bottle leans crookedly against the wall. (The girl) empties the plastic bag of smoked sausage, and puts the bottle in it, then (she) leaves.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>. "Ch'ai shih-fu" (Master Ch'ai), *SCMTHL*, p. 24.

The episode that follows describes the master's attraction to the girl's body, while simultaneously making a connection with the memory of his arrival in Taiwan: "As his hand reaches under (the girl's) clothes and touches her soft cold breasts, he suddenly remembers the spring of 1948, when he had just arrived at rainy Keelung city, seeing for the first time an ornamental cherry tree coming out from the stone wall of a tall gate, abundant blossom falling in the sooty cold rain. Only later did he learn that *Pa-ch'ung ying*<sup>7</sup> had been a brothel owned by Japanese people, and was changed to be a city government hostel after Taiwan was liberated (from the Japanese)."<sup>8</sup> Master Ch'ai's desire to regain his youth has metamorphosed into a desire to possess the girl. At the ninth session, as he examines the girl's eyes, attempting to cure her short-sight, he cannot help but lose control and kisses her forehead. Although she takes her leave of him deferentially, after this she never returns.

The story describes Master Ch'ai's feelings as he waits for the girl to come. As he recalls the tranquillity of his youth, he feels the absurdity of his position. As he waits for the young girl to arrive, not knowing whether she will come, he appears like a robot, driven only by his sensuality in his futile attempt to regain his youth. While the story shows the sensual worlds of the characters in considerable detail, there is less a sense of pleasure than of indulgence in order to escape, or at least have the illusion of escaping from a depressing state of bodily decline.

The image of righteous and well-educated mainlanders of Chu's early stories is diminished in this volume. We see a more private, more realistic portrayal of the living conditions of the immigrants, people who cannot content themselves with loyalty to classical moral standards, but have their own

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<sup>7</sup>. *Pa-ch'ung ying*, i.e. Double-flowering cherry tree (Yaezakura).

<sup>8</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

yearnings and desires for their lives, which all too often in the new society are illusory.

The village in China or the small towns in Taiwan, which are the protagonist's hometown in the film stories, has disappeared from this collection. People of different ages and ethnic groups have lost their connection with their native lands, and with it the basis of their moral stability. The Master's memory of his mainland Chinese friends and his memories of Kaoshiung and Keelung may serve as a focal point for his sense of belonging. Yet, reading "Master Ch'ai" we feel that time is frozen. The old man's early memories concentrate on visual impact and sensual refinement, as in his eyes, the red Taiwanese phoenix flowers, the first thing he saw when he arrived on the island become configured with the red Chinese cherry plant that now he waters every day in Taipei. In fact the flowers serve as symbols of Taiwan and China, while at the same time, to him, they are visually evocative of the "wild" and "primitive" in his sense of lost youth.

What occupies his mind are not so much the positive aspects of his life, but rather his despondency in his present environment, he feels that he has been maltreated by fate. He has spent years in Keelung port, but his memories of that time are only of trivial financial matters, such as how he started to make a living by doing coolie work in the docks, lacking any special feelings for his mainlander customers, except that it was easier for him to make more money out of them. Next, he owns a modest restaurant, is engaged for a while in smuggling, and finally, he lost all his money: "Every day, he seems to see a pile of heavy (gold) ingots<sup>9</sup> disclosed in golden light at the bottom of the deep blue ocean. . . ."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>. A piece of silver or gold (ingot) weighing about fifty-five ounces used in old China.

<sup>10</sup>. "Ch'ai shih-fu", *SCMTHL*, p. 26.

Master Ch'ai's obsession with the material life shows that the problem of survival from day to day is more important to him than worrying about his cultural and political identity. He does not feel like going back to China, knowing that, of his friends who had visited China, most had decided to come back to Taiwan. He feels that he should stay in Taiwan, a sexually exciting place, where he can at least watch suggestive Taiwanese talk shows on T. V.

His son runs an MTV centre, a business involving copying obscene video tapes, and his grandchildren are unavoidably contaminated by the commercial atmosphere, watching too many adult programs, neglecting their studies. But he cannot do anything to change the situation, as they communicate in Taiwanese and treat him like an outsider. His sense of isolation is not only reinforced by his children's indifference to his feelings, but by the physical ugliness of the city, the flying dust from the everlasting construction, and the stench of the ever increasing rubbish on the streets, all of which is depicted in contrast to his idealised memory of the welcoming warmth of Kunming and the old Taiwan. The story provides a moving picture of the master's loneliness and isolation:

Every day he stands on the chair taking sticks of incense between his fingers and diligently dusts the ancestral table (makes obeisance). Sometimes his daughter-in-law climbs up the chair to change (old) fruit for fresh. During the night he usually gets up twice, passing diagonally across the living room, where the whole family is watching a porno program, to go to the toilet. He scolds his grandchildren, there is school tomorrow, it's so late now, why have you still not gone to bed! A-Wan says, the summer holiday has already begun. The air conditioning runs



buzzing, his small room has never needed an electric fan, the world which is moving ahead has left him far behind.<sup>11</sup>

The fading mainlander society, which first appeared in "A Time to Live and A Time to Die" also features in her stories in this collection. However, the significance of Master Ch'ai is that it is the first time that Chu uses the images of the anxiety of sexual desire, and the weakening of the physical body to highlight the alienation of a mainlander from his environment. The story was reviewed and held in high esteem by critics such as Chan Hung-chih and David Der-wei Wang, both of whom considered it and the title story to be the best works in the *Splendour of the End of the Century*.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.3 Sexuality: The End of Innocence

In this collection the end of innocence is heralded by the disillusion suffered by those protagonists who become disaffected with their mainlander family traditions and ways, and yet cannot fit into the current Taiwanese social environment. Our main example is the protagonist of "Carnal Bodhisattva," a homosexual artist who reacts in this situation by giving himself up to sexual pleasure.

The story of "Carnal Bodhisattva" can be regarded as the precursor of Chu T'ien-wen's first novel, *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* to be published four years later. The description of homosexual love in "Carnal Bodhisattva" is the most convention-defying in the collection, it is striking in the enthusiasm

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<sup>11</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup>. Both Chan and Wang expressed their views in *HYCS*, pp. 17, 263.

with which the characters go beyond the bounds of normal sexual behaviour in order to indulge their lascivious carnal pleasures. The story begins in flashback, as the artist recalls losing his virginity to his friend, Chia Pa, a well-known basketball player from his civil-service community. The story moves forward to the present, describing the artist, now an adult, sitting in a piano bar being eyed by another man, who later becomes his new lover, Chung Lin.

The new lover reminds him of his first love of years ago. The author describes his feelings thus:

Those eyes were like those of seventeen years ago which took his innocence and, as though perfumed with an intoxicating scent, strongly aroused him. Snap the string, tear the silk, he instantly followed him, for like the bee and the flower together their encounter is fated by nature.<sup>13</sup>

Immediately after this depiction of arousal, there follows description of frenzied sexual acts: "They went to the tenth floor height, facing each other, naked, the highway bridge flying past the window, the orange light shining from the bridge, the cars from south and north move fast, driving over their heads with booming sound and that shining orange light. His (the artist) hands are reaching out to embrace him and he (the new lover) does the same. . . ."<sup>14</sup> The story essentially consists of the explicit details of the homosexual's encounters with several men, including his first lover, Chia Pa. In one episode, which takes place in a swimming pool, the protagonist watches while Chia Pa has sex with another, and

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13. "Jou-shen p'u-sa", *SCMTH*, p. 52.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

we are told that he is ignored "as if he is not there, like a single rash."<sup>15</sup> But, he still remembers and yearns for the love of his first partner.

The artist also recalls his experiences of seeking sex with strangers impersonally not caring who they are. One episode describes his picking-up two teenage youths hanging out on the street. The youths are not named, being referred to as "sixteen-year-old" and "seventeen-year-old." Chu creates a depraved image of a homosexual love triangle. The protagonist knows that the youths are lovers, yet lusts after the "seventeen-year-old." Realising this, the younger youth at once disappears for a while to give them a chance to make love. The ensuing scene is suffused with primitive violent passion:

Like the light and dark of the yin-yang universe, on one side are the sparse, scattered neon lights of the back (streets) of the city. On the other is the reflection of the city in the water, the fetid wind's decaying rotten odour blowing from one hundred and eight thousand miles away, from the dark, opposite side of river. He takes the seventeen year-old into the reflected side, pushing him against the rough rock wall of the river bank, and kissing him once ferociously, as Chia Pa treated him years ago.<sup>16</sup>

In the story the protagonist at first appears as the corrupter, however, after he has experienced the seventeen-year-old, the sixteen year old eventually returns and suggests that he has sex with him. The younger one now becomes the manipulator, and the artist the corrupted: "The sixteen-year-old dragging him, pulls him to lie down (together), asking him to have sex, which he does, with a clear head, delighted, and lonely too. When the rain stops, he gets up and

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<sup>15</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>16</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

leaves, trampling on the wet, shining reflection on the water. Carnal Bodhisattva by night, delivers all living things."<sup>17</sup>

The artist in "Carnal Bodhisattva," driven by incessant sexual desire, even knowing that his latest lover is in fact a bisexual who has a girl friend, he nevertheless arranges their next rendezvous.

None of his relationships, whether with Chia Pa or Chung Lin, or any of his promiscuous contacts appear to involve any sense of moral guilt, merely the release of physical tension: "The brotherly style, the smile which would only come from the boys of the civil service community, the intimate friendship between men, that is sufficient. He smiled happily."<sup>18</sup>

The sexual element in these encounters evidently does not involve understanding or sympathy between the couples involved. Although the artist and his new lover indeed have similar childhood memories of growing up in the mainlander's civil service communities, their conversation about the past at their second meeting does not evoke any profound thoughts of their families or the changing face of the communities, but is simply a lengthy list of old television programmes -- commercial songs, cartoons, and James Bond movies. For the characters in this collection the most important relationship they have is the one that is actually taking place at the time, always against the background of the city.

Under the shadow of AIDS, the artist begins to feel that the world is closing in on him as he moves towards "the splendour of purgatory."<sup>19</sup> Feeling frightened by his feeling that his body is used up by sex, he exclaims: "Since the

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<sup>17</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>19</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

body is detritus, cut it up into wooden chips!"<sup>20</sup> He recalls his mother's favourite "dry wooden fish" (mu-ch'ai-yü), the cut pieces of dry fish cooked in a vegetable soup, the smell of which dominated his childhood memory and came to symbolise both self-indulgence and neurotic self-absorption, and awakens his sexual desire. At the end of the story, as his new lover leaves to meet his girl friend, the artist feels disappointed that they will never have another chance to have sex.

What is remarkable is that Chu uses the symbol of Buddha to create a sense of purity and spirituality in the protagonist. The evocation of Buddha in the context of a story of unbridled sexual indulgence may be thought to be designed to shock the reader, and may well have played a part in the choice of imagery. However, the main effect is to point to the contrast between the Buddha who is cleansed of sexual desire, and the artist who seems to be attempting to purge himself of sexual desire by continual indulgence.

#### **4.4 Shattered Romantic Fantasy**

The protagonist of "Take Me with You, Moonlight," Chia-wei takes refuge in her fantasy life. She works as an office clerk in an international advertising agency. Having studied art, she likes to read magazines, especially the pictures. She feels more affinity with Europe than with the China her parents remember so fondly:

Nanking or Shanghai, to her, have never been as interesting as the places she reads about in magazines, Tokyo, Shibuya, French style white painted

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

cake shop of Daikanyama, 'Mujirushi ryohin ten' in Seibu, Aoyama (road), and the remote Greek Mykonos Island, the tranquil blue Mediterranean, with the white painted walls and white fences of the towns and the scattered, labyrinthine complicated streets of small houses are all more appealing to her than the two old grey cities. She cannot identify with her mother's nostalgic feeling for China at all.<sup>21</sup>

She has a long-term boy friend Li P'ing, but falls in love with a male colleague in their Hong Kong office whom she sees when he comes to Taiwan. The story describes her ardent pursuit of this Hong Kong playboy and how it leads to the destruction of her romantic dream.

Chia-wei determinedly chases the Hong Kong playboy, even going to Hong Kong for a few days, hoping to see him, but in vain. The man clearly only meant to flirt and does not want to develop a serious relationship. Devastated, she cannot accept the rejection, turning inwards to her own fantasy, creating an ideal lover "Prince JJ" and imagining herself as the heroine Mei-mei. By intertwining reality and fantasy, Chu T'ien-wen illustrates the office clerk's self-indulgence:

Chia-wei is ill at the eighth day, she begs Prince JJ to tell her the truth.

Ah! Mei-mei, Prince JJ says, it is time to tell you the truth, after this you have to come back, otherwise, you will become a floating traveller in time, finding no exit in the past, future or present. . . So, Mei-mei, close your

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<sup>21</sup>. "Tai wo ch'ü pa yüeh-kuang" (Take Me With You, Moonlight), *SCMTHL*, p. 112.

eyes, let us return to the day, everything starts from that day I came to your store to buy Marlboro Light.<sup>22</sup>

The description then focuses on the female office clerk's chaotic thoughts, indicating her confusion by the use of a babbling style of language. The story mildly mocks the merry-go-round of the world of fashion, speaking with the voice of "Prince JJ" :

I am the man of the future, living in the twenties of the twenty-first century, a time when fashion evokes the style of the end of the last century, the clothing, furniture, antiques, restaurants, and socialising and meeting places, with no exception, obsessively imitates everything from the 1980s.<sup>23</sup>

However, Prince JJ is depicted very much like the Hong Kong playboy, distant and self-centred, while the heroine Mei-mei, like the female office clerk herself, is in the miserable situation of having lost her own sense of time, feeling she has no place to turn to:

Mei-mei, you and I met in borrowed time, now we have to go back. Although we will meet again, you will not know me, and whatever has happened will be forgotten. Mei-mei, do not cry, everything that has happened will be forgotten, forgotten, forgotten, the silence of the forgotten turquoise ocean will make you capsize and sink. . . .<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>23</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>24</sup>. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

The boundary between fantasy and reality disappears; even in the fantastic world of comics there is no escape, the characters are like those she meets in real life, and the action like her real life is full of conflict.

The office clerk's confused feelings reach the point where she loses control. She draws a picture of Prince JJ without a face. One day she shows the story book to a male customer, and when he asks why the character does not have a face, she goes berserk and stabs him with a knife. After that incident, she loses her memory, and is hospitalised. In the final scene, she secretly burns her manuscripts, not because she rejects her fantasies, but as an act of symbolic submission to bind herself to her fantasy for ever:

She watches the shimmering blue and red flame leap towards the roof, the man who wears a clerical-collar shirt, a hunting suits with a raincoat, a scarf tucked under the two lapels of the coat, and pleated baggy trousers underneath, disappeared from the world. Prince JJ and Mei-mei exist only once, ending in the fire. Take me with you, Moonlight.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, during the story, the mainlander settlement has been reconstructed as national housing, such details are to be read as reinforcing the impression the story gives of the deteriorating cohesion of the mainlander community as the city develops.

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<sup>25</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 154.



#### 4.5 A Hybrid Culture

A feature of the modern city is its international nature. The activity in politics, business and the arts attracts people from many countries, all contributing to the dynamism of the metropolis. Chu had already dealt with this theme, most notably in her film script *City of Sadness*. In this internationally acclaimed film, she used Japanese, various Chinese dialects and Taiwanese to convey the complicated situation in Taiwan after 1949, in a way that strongly evokes the city as a focus of immigration, and shows the political atmosphere that pervaded people's lives resulting from conflict among the different ethnic groups.

Continuing in this vein, she began to render the increasingly homogenous culture of Taipei diffusely in ever more exotic language. Here, in "Red Rose Is Paging You" Chu has created an extended piece in integrationist mood. For her as an author, the cultural distances between the various minorities represented a challenge to be bridged. The main character is a middle-aged overseas Chinese from Korea, Hsiang-Ke who lives in Taipei with his wife and two children, and works for a TV company. As a foreigner he is acceptable to both mainlanders and Taiwanese, he can sing songs in both languages and seems to have become integrated into the life of Taipei. He has a hectic social life, which revolves around his business dealings and contacts. These latter involve constant socialising with a wide variety of people from Hong Kong stars to local gangsters, dealers in illegal animal skins from Indonesia, as well as potential customers from the entertainment business for the TV company. Chu describes the sights and sounds of the night life of Taipei, the evocative names of the restaurants and bars, such as "Lao K Chia" (lit. Lao-K's home), "I Am I, *Wo shih*

Wo." The protagonist takes full advantage of the night life. He is fond of dressing up, going to places of amusement, generally leading a non-stop night life of food, drugs, gambling, and sex. Chu shows the media worker as a risible figure in the urban environment in his use of vulgar language: "Ha La Taiwanese, sips a mouthful of the coconut fruit juice," "twist the feet with the cha cha cha beat,"<sup>26</sup> "Red Rose is paging Blue Sock."<sup>27</sup>

Because of the amount of time he spends out on the town, the night life becomes his habitat, as the description of the atmosphere of a club "like a magpie making a nest" suggests, leading this kind of life, on the one hand he feels at home in places of entertainment, but on the other, he has become an outsider in his own home, like the foreign designed "ITZIO lamp" incongruously standing in his living-room. Then one day, his unfamiliar home suddenly begins to exercise more fascination for him than does the night life, and bathing with his children becomes somehow more exciting, and sleeping with his wife more attractive than socialising with his friends. The reason is that, in line with developments in society, Chu's female characters in this collection are no longer limited to their roles as the traditional house wife and daughter. The wife is enjoying herself taking classes in Japanese, dancing in the park, getting involved in community work, and supporting the DPP, instead of attending to her husband and the home. Another example is in "Take Me With You, Moonlight," where both mother and daughter have their own love affairs and are careless about their domestic duties.

At first sight, "Red Rose Is Paging You" describes the pleasure of the media worker in exploring the coarse urban middle class world of sexual titillation that makes him feels sophisticated and experienced. But his wife is increasingly

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26. "Hung-mei kui hu-chiao ni" (Red Rose Is Paging You), *SCMTHL*, pp. 157.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 170.

repelled by him, and her growing independence becomes a threat that he is unable to handle. The media worker's life registers both the celebration and the portent of the violent, anarchic potential of women. However, those women he has met outside of his marriage are not the only threat to his security, for even greater problems are emerging from within, as the rise of his wife's domestic power begins to dominate and threaten to cast him in a merely marginal role in the family. As time goes on, he is increasingly afraid that his wife will abandon her household chores altogether and that she and his son will turn him into an outcast within his own family.

The media worker feeling his insecurity in the family, says: "women always pretend to men that they are naive and hide their sophistication, for they just do not want to embarrass men, that's all."<sup>28</sup> He does not know if he should feel appreciative or terrified. At the same time as he bemoans the pressure of work, and the strain of being submissive to his boss, he suddenly realises, to his horror, that his life is meaningless, playing the role society expects of him turns out to be futile.

There are two obvious aspects of "Red Rose Is Paging You" that remind us of Nativist literature. First, an incident where the media worker's wife petitions the local government for the right to use a community space, thus evoking the kind of minority issues that the Nativist writers often depicted.<sup>29</sup>

Secondly, Chu's highly sensitive, sympathetic approach to the media worker who, being an ordinary man tries to assimilate the values and pattern of work and family, but turns out to be a victim of the opportunities for personal

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<sup>28</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>29</sup>. P'eng Jui-chin has pointed out some of the major items of the Nativist agenda such as, human rights and the Feminist movement, see his *Taiwan wen-hsüeh t'an-so* (The Search for the Taiwan Literature) (Taipei: Ch'ien-wei chu-pan-she, 1995), p. 257.

development open to the women of his family in urban life. This empathetic treatment is similar to that used by some well-known Nativist writers, such as Huang Ch'un-ming's much-loved story "His Son's Big Doll" (Erh-tzu te ta wan-ou, 1968).<sup>30</sup>

In putting Chu's writing in perspective, it is crucial to recognise this story as the transition point where, after nearly eight years of involvement in film work she began to use similar themes to those of the most famous Nativist writers in writing about a hybrid society. From then on her urban stories with their staccato technique and a mixture of languages, portray an urban aesthetic, giving her work an even more clearly defined identity than she had previously succeeded in establishing.

#### 4. 6 Artificiality of Life in the City

The title story "Splendour of the End of the Century" contains fictionalised accounts of current events, centring on the glamour of the rising metropolis--Taipei. Chu's depiction of the city started with "City of the Summer Heat," later through "Master Ch'ai" and "Take Me With You, Moonlight" she continued to depict the oppressive physical expansion of the city. The urban imagery of the story "Splendour of the End of the Century" is the most effective

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<sup>30</sup>. The story "His Son's Big Doll" is about a man who, for financial reasons, takes a job as a sandwich board man. In order to attract more people, he dresses up like a clown while doing his job. One day when he decides not to put on his disguise mask, his son cannot recognise him, since he is used to his father with a clown face. Kao T'ien-sheng, for instance, described Huang's urban stories as "understanding" and "humorous", see his *Taiwan Hsiao-shuo yü hsiao-shuo chia* (Novels and Novelists from Taiwan) (Taipei: Ch'ien-wei chu-pan-she, 1994), Chapter Chapter 7, p. 107.

in the collection. It describes the life of a young fashion model and her lover, a middle-aged, married architect, Lao-Tuan. The narrative covers almost ten years of the model's career from the 1980s to the 1990s, and provides a rich description of the history of fashion over the same period.

Chu, like Chang Ai-ling, has an intense interest in the world of fashion, enabling her to use linguistic fireworks which match the visual impact of colour and style, and the elegance of interior design with, to borrow from Barthes, an "excess of precision," "a kind of maniacal exactitude of language" and as "a descriptive madness."<sup>31</sup> For instance, at one point in a description of the colour of make-up, adjectives are simply piled up one upon another: "Egg shell white, pearl grey, oyster black, ivory yellow, sea shell blue."<sup>32</sup> In such passages the reader can almost sense the "author's pleasure in writing" in this way.<sup>33</sup> The result of such refined aestheticism, which combines both visual and literary effect, is as Chu herself said of Chang Ai-ling, that each page can be read independently for its delicate imagery and refined language; to read it is to see the unfurling of a visually stunning, painted scroll.

Post-Martial Law Taipei is very much caught up in the network of transnational capitalism and global cultural exchange, and the imagery of urban enchantment prevails, with some variation, throughout the collection. Everyone, young or old, is searching constantly for his or her own variety of exotic pleasure, demanding from the city a satisfaction that can never be complete. In "Take Me with You, Moonlight," the Hong Kong playboy exploiting the world of

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<sup>31</sup>. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), p. 26. These phrases used by Barthes to describe Robbe-Grillet's language are applicable to Chu T'ien-wen.

<sup>32</sup>. "Shih-chi-mo te hua-li" (Splendour of the End of the Century), *SCMTHL*, p. 185.

<sup>33</sup>. For further discussion on this aspect, see Chapter V.

international advertising, has managed to have sexual liaisons in both Hong Kong and Taipei while satisfying his taste for popular music, fashion and restaurants.

In "Red Rose Is Paging You," the media worker lives a life of flexible working hours, his leisure time a progression from one place of entertainment to another. As the main character is exhausted after a night of pleasure: KTV, MTV, C B radio -- the focus of the story sweeps outwards and upwards, towards the night sky, and its transformation into daylight with a complex pattern of the reflected artificial lights of the city combining with the spreading natural light of dawn over that "audible but invisible" metropolis of electronic communication.<sup>34</sup> This imagery is characteristic of Chu's new writing style. In making an imaginative connection between night and day, her observation of metropolitan life has indeed become dazzlingly colourful as compared with the dark tones of "The City of Summer Heat."

Chu also gives a sweeping view of Taipei with the dust-covered houses of "Master Ch'ai," and the sunrise over the rooftops in "Splendour of the End of the Century," exultantly evoking a prophetic vision of a new day. In these stories the panoramic vista becomes something of a literary signature, which when placed at the beginning and at the end of the story, serves to hold its teeming life in a frame of reference. Though it becomes formulaic, this frame seems throughout both to transcend and distance the reader from the messy complexities and contradictions of real life. These considerations are especially relevant when considering the opening section of "Splendour of the End of the Century" where we are shown the city from three different view points. Firstly, the anonymous, impersonal narrator, appropriately for an observer, takes a bird's-eye view over the city:

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<sup>34</sup>. "Huang-mei kui hu-chiao ni", *SCMTHL*, p. 170.

This is Taiwan's unique city skyline, Mi-ya often stands on her ninth floor terrace, observing the skies. Depending on her mood at the time, she may burn a pinch of serene fragrance.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, for Lao-Tuan, Mi-ya's architect lover, the city in all its aspects provides an aesthetic spectacle, and he describes the colours of paintings by Van Gogh, Monet and Renoir as if he knew them intimately. His reactions provide Chu with an opportunity to display a richness of language which recalls the French Impressionist painters with their aim of portraying a scene in patterns of colour rather than giving a clinical, factual representation. As for Lao-Tuan, he is, for the most part, concerned solely with the aesthetics of the scene and not any other aspect, be it social, political or cultural:

Illegally constructed iron shanties (houses) cover the top of (every) building; ten million gables like a sea of forest extend to where the sun sets and where the sun rises. Lao Tuan, Miya's lover had said, We need lightweight building materials. Lao Tuan uses lightweight perforated tin plate material to solve the problem of sun glare from skylights and French windows of villas.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, Mi-ya whose view is conditioned by her alienation from her life in the city. She observes life around her in the city with an eye which is not just disinterested, like the narrator, but which views the world as though it is a completely different universe peopled by a different kind of creature from herself:

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35. "Shih-chi-mo te hua-li", *SCMTHL*, p. 171.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

"Mi-ya is a person who trusts in (her sense of )smell; her life is dependent on memories evoked by different smells. The scent of serene fragrance takes her back to the Spring fashion shows of 1989, when she was drowning in (oceans) of chiffon, georgette, crêpe, satin and saris, bound, entagled, encircled, wrapped, and hanging in the sweeping Indian fashion, the stitchless perfection of the clothes of Heaven. . . ."37

In Taiwan, Taipei is the only city with aspirations to international financial and cultural importance, "Outside Taipei is like a border area" (in old China).38 In the wake of the rapid development of nativism in 1988, Taipei gained the prestige of a national rather than a provincial capital. It had been a city of "Chinese opera performance" and "the melody of the Erh-hu (two string violin)" on every radio,39 but it had now made a leap forward to become a city of the next urban generation -- a city of a young generation dominated not by an historical culture but by the visual imagery and fashion of the modern world.

The fashion model of the story often goes to antique shops to look for exquisite art objects, which would evoke the feeling of a mysterious ancient world. Visiting her female friend's shop, Mi-ya takes great pleasure in "the layers of perfumed air in the flower shop like a Byzantine embroidery; constantly having the smell of teas and coffees, evoking the age of the craftsman. . . all the fruit cakes, cheese pie, oatmeal cookies, flower petal pudding are handmade."40 The age of the craftsmen and the "handmade" is throughout contrasted with the

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37. *Ibid.*, p. 171. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of the translation swathed by Eva Hung. See "Fin de Siècle Splendour," in *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Chinese Literature*, ed. Joseph S. M. Lau and Howard Goldblatt (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 445.

38. "Huang-ju tso-jih" (Seeming Like Yesterday), *SCMTHL*, p. 198.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

40. "Shih-chi-mo te hua-li", *SCMTHL*, p. 183.



"machine-made" age. Though Mi-ya seems to pursue an archaic artistic life style, such a search is limited to make-believe; her dislike of the machine, her nostalgia for the classical crafts cannot enable her actually to go back in time to a pastoral age, nor would she really want to. In spite of her nostalgia, once Mi-ya leaves Taipei and visits the country, she feels that she is in a "desolate foreign land," and it is only when she returns to the city, that she feels alive, as free as "the fish that regains the water."<sup>41</sup> After this, instead of going to the countryside, Mi-ya creates her own urban-pastoral scenery. In her city apartment, she displays a wide range of indoor plants and herbs, which simulates an urban forest atmosphere, all beautiful and alluring flowers, delicate fabrics with a pattern of artificial jungle animals bathed in a happy luminosity.

In "Splendour of the End of the Century" we see Chu giving the city a more favourable image than in "City of Summer Heat," where Taipei is described as "stale" and "polluted" with only heat and dirt.<sup>42</sup> For Mi-ya, as a member of the new generation, Taipei is the only place to live in Taiwan. She knows that only in the city are her dreams capable of realisation, her feelings are perhaps a reflection of Chu's own state of mind as the Taiwanese nativist influence on her grew stronger, and her China-centred ideology gradually weakened. She, like Mi-ya, embraces the city. Thus, as Taipei becomes more internationalised, Chu's imagery itself moves away from the traditional Chinese and becomes more involved with Taipei city, revealing Chu's growing interest in modern life there. In this respect, Chu T'ien-wen herself clearly appreciated the tremendous change in Taipei taking place at this time, a change that increasingly reflected the latest international fashions and styles.

While expressing their inadequacies and pretension, Chu nevertheless

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 188-189.

<sup>42</sup> "Yen-hsia chih-tu", *YHCT*, p. 150.

shows her sympathy for most of her characters' dependence on the city. For instance, in "Carnal Bodhisattva" the youths, in spite of their gross sexual habits, display a more innocent interest in eating. Though self-evidently food is the most basic material requirement, culinary delicacies acquires a symbolic status and the quest for them becomes a frequent theme in this collection. The symbolic potential of Chu's characters' preoccupation with food is indeed vast. It can represent metonymically all the activities associated with sustenance of the body and maintenance of the household. Alternatively, it can act as a metaphor for other appetites, "the quest for emotional fulfilment, the yearning for spiritual nourishment."<sup>43</sup> While indulging in homosexual sex, the youths constantly snack on colourful yet insubstantial food -- soft jelly candy: "The seventeen-year-old has black, turbid eyes like the eyes of an Indian, indulges in carnal pleasure without restraint. . . big bags of the pinkish, whitish, greenish, spherical shape like baby toys, they are melted sweetly in the mouth, like eating air. . . A whole package of kidney shaped rubber-like candy. . . ." <sup>44</sup> Such an expression implicitly suggests sexual pleasure, and hints at the frustrations suffered by the youths concerned.

Chu followed the example of such writers Huang Ch'un-ming and Wang Chen-ho in taking the original rural-based Nativism into city based "Modernist Nativism."<sup>45</sup> In the stories of this collection by Chu, the city now plays a central part, its physicality shaping the life and enjoyment of those who live in it. Each

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43. See Christopher Lloyd, *J.K. Huysmans and the Fin-de-siècle Novel* (Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p. 76.

44. "Jou-shen p'u-sa", *SCMTHL*, p. 59.

45. For an analysis in depth of Modernist Nativism, see Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang, *Modernism and the Nativist Resistance: Contemporary Chinese Fiction from Taiwan* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), particularly under the section "Misconceptions About the Modernist-Nativist Polarisation", pp. 153-155.

story is intensely urban in spirit; Taipei is far more than a mere backdrop. It plays as crucial a part as any of the characters. The city, materialistic as it is, provides its people with openings to develop their interests, as we see when even the media worker in "Red Rose Is Paging You" has the opportunity to discover a new talent for singing by attending KTV parlours after work.

However, the reason why people enjoy the city is evidently more because they love to display their own style than out of any need to communicate with others. For example, in "Take Me With You, Moonlight," the Hong Kong playboy is described as a man who: "has entered an age when the city is transformed into a theatre. More and more compartmentalised and secluded locations provide people with their intimate stage -- what the barbecue restaurant has provided him with is above all the pleasure of self-expression and connoisseurship. As well as being a good performer, at the same time being a good audience (appreciating his own performance), he must be understanding and considerate of his partner on the stage. Yes, the pleasure comes entirely from the process of exhibiting one's personality. . . ."46

Although it is not too difficult to name writers in Chinese literature, who writing about food, have served up an inexhaustible menu of enticing dishes with a buoyant relish, it is hard to think of another contemporary writer who has presented food with such a calculated attitude to the protagonist's choice of meal and restaurant as an expression of personal taste. A similar example can be found in "Carnal Buddha" in which the artist likes to eat in a refined Japanese restaurant as a way of counteracting the effects of his busy urban life style.

Chu suggests that when Taipei, and, by extension urban society in general, becomes open, everyone will use their own physical body to testify to the freedom that society has newly created. But, in Chu's city, people cannot

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46. "Tai wo chü pa yüeh-kuang", *SCMTHL*, p. 96.

come to know themselves or their lovers even in the most secluded and intimate places. For instance, in "Take Me With You, Moonlight," after drinking wine for the first time with her colleagues in a restaurant, the office clerk expresses her narcissistic obsession with her own beauty:

Chia-wei earnestly wishes that Li P'ing could see how alluring she is now.

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She pities herself like a flower on a high cliff, blossoming and dying there. No one sees the best moment. Because there is only one chance to be beautiful, it cannot be recovered or re-produced. When the moment has gone, it never returns. She has fallen from the peak of her emotion, but no one knows.<sup>47</sup>

A similar sense of narcissism is prevalent in the story "Splendour of the End of the Century" in which the fashion model, Mi-ya takes a similar pleasure in using her body to display fashions on the catwalk. Her main pleasure comes from the opportunity to exhibit her physical appeal, as the author puts it: "Material girl, why not? worship materials, worship money, youth and beauty, she dotes on her physical attractiveness."<sup>48</sup> The narrative shows how Mi-ya mixes her feeling for costume detail and decoration with emotion towards her lover. What Mi-ya loves especially is the way Lao-Tuan appreciates her fine taste. When visiting her place for the first time, he makes a point of asking whether her five cushions are bought from different places, the question making clear that he has an eye for details. Since Lao-Tuan is an architect, presumably trained to read such signs, this couple appear to be brought together more by

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<sup>47</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>48</sup>. "Shih-chi-mo te hua-li", *SCMTHL*, p. 179.

mutual interests than by sexual attraction. We are told that Mi-ya and her architect lover are often in a state of exhaustion obsessively enthusing over their own appreciation of beautiful details, to the point where "they are unable to do the thing that lovers should be doing."<sup>49</sup>

Chu T'ien-wen's depiction of sunset has a strong sensual effect in the way that she uses the burning image of the sun to symbolise the flaring of love and sexual desire. But sex, once again, seems curiously to be absent here, as though there is an asexual component in Mi-ya's behaviour even though she and her lover are engaged in an affair. Another episode of the story describes how Miya and a group of friends spend a night in the mountains. She feels as if she is making love with nature when the wind and the birds wake her up in the morning.

Mi-ya has multiple identities; the story describes her as a powerful "witch," the way she grows exotic plants in her city apartment, while paradoxically, her lover views her as a European medieval monk, moving serenely around her monk's cell tending her plants: "Her bathroom grows Gentlemen orchid, African Flower, Ornamental Pineapple, Peacock Palm, all kinds of unidentified green fern. Also, hundreds of dazzlingly-coloured bath salts, oils, soaps and shower gel, like potions in an alchemist's laboratory."<sup>50</sup> Whatever other identities Mi-ya exhibits here, that of the "witch-monk" above all seems to confirm the idea of an androgynous being.

However, the exotic and glamorous life of the city conceals the potential insecurity and disillusion beneath the indulgent surface.

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<sup>49</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>50</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

#### 4.7 An Indulgent Society

In the story "Splendour of the End of the Century," it is revealed that the fashion model's future plan is to give up modelling, and take up hand- making artistic paper. Since, it would seem, she is afraid that her older lover will die before her, she feels the needs to develop a skill to secure an independent livelihood. This is expressed in terms of a vision that is apocalyptic yet hopeful:

One day the world that men built based on theories and systems will collapse, she (Mi-ya) will survive with her memories of scent and colour, and will rebuild the world from there.<sup>51</sup>

As the feminist critic Chung Ling points out, the heroine is a financially independent fashion model not constrained by a traditional marriage.<sup>52</sup> While agreeing with Chung Ling that Chu portrays a modern, self-supporting woman, in this story the author's aim seems to be more to demonstrate the isolation of Mi-ya in the modern urban environment. For us to understand Chu's intention, it is not necessary to interpret Mi-ya as a feminist, rather she (Mi-ya) should be seen as an alienated person in an urban (artistic) environment who is seeking to make symbolic contact with reality by developing a skill. Against the background of a modern city which suffers from traffic congestion, pollution, and a high incidence of mental breakdown, Mi-ya's handicraft of paper-making symbolises the aspect of aestheticism that offers hope of enabling people to escape from the underlying

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51. "Huang-ju tso-jih", *SCMTHL*, p. 192.

52. Chung Ling, "Nü-hsing chu-yi yü Taiwan nü hsing tso-chia hsiao-shuo" (Feminism and the Fiction of Taiwan Women Writers) in *Ssu-shih nien lai te Chung-kuo wen-hsüeh* (Chinese Literature in Forty Years) ed. Shao Yu-ming, Chang Pao-ch'in and Ya Hsien (Taipei: Lien-ching ch'u-pan-she, 1994), p. 202.

sordid realities of city life. Chu's vision of Mi-ya's native land is expressed thus: "This is her native land. Taipei, Milan, Paris, London, Tokyo, and New York -- a nation which consists of connected cities, she lives there, learning its rites and customs, studying its crafts, polishing its unsurpassed elegance and becoming a talented woman (who shapes the city)."<sup>53</sup>

To the fashion model, Taipei is a world apart from the rest of Taiwan, she feels it to be her true home, a city she imagines to be as modern as Milan. Moreover, her way of dressing is obviously not suitable anywhere in her native island except in Taipei city. Not only does she feel strange and alienated in rural Taiwan, but the country-folk do indeed consider her to be an "alien."<sup>54</sup>

Life in the modern, fast changing, media-dominated city brings with it all the problems with which city-dwellers have to cope. Increasing, ever- pervasive pollution is beyond their control; in "Red Rose Is Paging You" or "Take Me With You, Moonlight," the social problems of the dysfunctional family are likewise beyond the control of the present day urban husband and father -- unlike the traditional Chinese patriarch. However, such problems, objectively more serious as they may be, do not offer such a serious threat to the individual as do fears of bodily deterioration. In Chu's modern city getting old is the only crime and the only real fear, the problem continually haunts the characters in these stories, linked inevitably with the pursuit of sexual satisfaction, the theme with which most of her stories are directly or indirectly concerned. For instance, in "Red Rose Is Paging You," the media worker in his forties believes that because he is indulging in too much sexual activity, his body is getting weaker.

Once the so-called Carnal Bodhisattva, the homosexual artist escapes from his extended family and the boring, materialistic life style of his relatives, he

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<sup>53</sup>. "Shih-chi-mo te hua-li", *SCMTHL*, p. 189.

<sup>54</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

devotes himself to his own unrestrained enjoyment. The story follows a day of the protagonist's stream of consciousness while staying with his family:

He goes to his sister's home which is one concrete bridge away, costing him less than a hundred dollars taxi fare, but he has not been here for two years already. Sister is not like sister, and uncle is not like uncle. Only the television is loud all night. His old mother phones long distance. . . asking him to heed her advice: Fourth Mao-mao, don't work too late. . . You are still passing a stool every other days, aren't you? (You) should eat more fruit.<sup>55</sup>

Similarly, the artist's new, young lover claims that he indulges in homosexual practice to alleviate the boredom of his girl friend and his daily routine office work. The artist is totally subordinated to his sexual desire, before seeing his new lover, he reads pornographic books, explores exotic aromas, exquisite foods and drinks just to stimulate his own sexual arousal. His artificial surroundings are an elaborate way of avoiding spiritual questioning and self-doubt, just like everyone in the collection who lives out a secret life of his own passion. To his way of thinking, his lasciviousness has simply been passed on genetically from "his ancestors," who must all have been as debauched as he is -- a somewhat shocking inversion of traditional ancestor respect, it has to be said.<sup>56</sup>

A minor figure, the mother of the female clerk in "Take Me With You, Moonlight" is an example of the attitude which Chu ascribes to many mainlanders, namely that their nostalgic feelings for China are not necessarily based on the traditional cultural identity, but rather on their individual feelings

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55. "Jou-shen p'u-sa", *SCMTHL*, p. 62.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 65.



towards family and friends. Mrs. Chen cannot forget China because she cannot forget her lover there, whom she meant to marry, but who later married another woman. For years, she has been tortured by jealousy of the woman whom her lover married, waiting year after year for the day of return to China where she would see him again. When the day finally comes, she packs everything of value in her luggage intending never to return to Taiwan. However, on meeting the now ageing former lover, she finds him not to be as she expected -- an uninteresting old widower whose wife has been dead for many years. Thus her long-awaited trip to China reveals that all those years she has cherished the picture of rejoining her lover were a delusion. As soon as her hopes are revealed to be false, all traces of nostalgia for the China that she had yearned for vanish. Mrs. Chen and Chia-wei, mother and daughter, both experience the uncertainty and disappointment underlying the attractive facade of the sensual possibilities of the city.

#### **4. 8 Identifying with the Common People: Affinity with Chang Ai-ling**

Hou Hsiao-Hsien, the director of most of Chu's screenplays, once said: "Amidst change, people have tremendous survival instincts and determination to face up to challenges."<sup>57</sup> Selective memory as an aid to survival in a period of change is an important aspect. Whether Mrs. Chen or Master Ch'ai, they select what they want to remember, for as Chu's narrator expresses: "A person only remembers what he wants to, so memory can be corrected, history is also capable

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<sup>57</sup>. Quoted from June Yip, "Constructing a Nation: Taiwanese History and the Films of Hou Hsiao-hsien," in *Transnational Chinese Cinemas*, ed. Sheldon Hsiao-Peng Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p. 162.

of sublimation."<sup>58</sup> That is exactly how ordinary people are able to carry on their lives after experiencing the horror of catastrophe or the collapse of their wishes and plans. The main point is that Chu's characters are all alienated from themselves and from society to a degree; they are trapped by the frustrations of their search for love.

In expressing the common people's joy and pain, Chu T'ien-wen seemingly abandons the political aims that she derived from Hu Lan-ch'eng's theoretical writing on *shih*/heroic action, and moves towards Chang Ai-ling's *min*/humanistic approach: "The common people are not heroes, but they carry the main stream of our time. . . they do not indulge in tragically heroic (*pei-chuang*), but have a sense of desolation (*ts'ang-liang*)."<sup>59</sup> The perpetual longing for an unattainable secure physical existence in the face of an uncertain, changing world is a testament to the power of belief in fate, destiny and hope for the future.

The fashion model's statement about her plans to secure her future with the useful skill of paper-making closely echoes Chang Ai-ling's remark in the preface of her *Romances*, where she praises the indomitable skill and indefatigable resilience of a female opera-singer, and predicts that she will be the only one who will survive as the world changes. What could be added is that the fashion model serves as a symbol by which Chu confirms the power of common people. It is not only Mi-ya who has a skill; the other characters in this collection all have their own professional competence, so it can be said that they all have the power to survive. Mere survival itself seems not to be a problem for her characters, for Chu T'ien-wen suggests throughout that people are capable of developing their skills, the media worker knowing how to sing well; even the

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58. "Tai wo ch'ü pa yüeh-kuang", *SCMTHL*, p. 146.

59. Chang Ai-ling, *Liu-yen*, p. 19.

retired father in "Take Me With You, Moonlight," refreshing his cooking skills so as better to manage his domestic life.

In this respect Chu's depiction of the common people (min) is very much in line with Chang Ai-ling's -- both express faith in the practical skills of their characters in surviving in a difficult, changing world. If there is a difference between the two writers on this point, it is that Chang Ai-ling's men are often shown as weak characters (as shown in Chapter I), whereas Chu T'ien-wen's have stronger mental fibre. It could be said that Chu T'ien-wen's concept of *shih* gives her more belief in the adequacy of the male of the species than Chang Ai-ling, who had little faith in men in general.

#### 4.9 A Writer Betrays His Calling

In "Splendour of the End of the Century" Chu demonstrates her own love of fashion, art, interior design, etc., and she manifestly takes pleasure in her description of such things.<sup>60</sup> This may have influenced her in taking a sympathetic view of Mi-ya in contrast to her attack in the writer in "Seeming Like Yesterday," whom she condemns for his betrayal of his social task and rationality.

Chu's social criticism in this collection is at its sharpest and most direct in "Seeming Like Yesterday." In the other stories in this collection, she displays a tolerant attitude towards a motley crowd, such as a cowardly and selfish playboy, "innocent yet shameless" juvenile delinquents, a financially

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<sup>60</sup>. "Hsiang-tso" (I would like to become. . . ), *HPTKS*, p. 223. In this short essay, Chu T'ien-wen mentioned that she would "like to be a fashion model, so she could have countless beautiful clothes to wear."

independent mistress -- but, she cannot accept a writer who panders to public taste at the expense of his higher calling.<sup>61</sup>

The story describes a male Nativist writer in his forties, who has not published any new work for a long time, but is popular among the younger generation, and in constant demand to give speeches not only on literature but also on various social issues. One day, after he has given a speech, a young man approaches him to tell him about the death of the woman who had been the writer's first love, whom he had forgotten years ago. Since the woman had been this young man's sister-in-law and the young man was evidently very attached to the woman, the writer pretends that he still has affectionate memories of her and expresses his sympathy. The writer is condemned for abandoning his integrity, for losing himself in his public image and adjusting his opinions to please his audience:

A glamorous speech does not need much content, and does not depend on preparation. (He is) so busy, how can he find time to prepare? It all depends on the situation, what kind of cards he play depends on what kind of people come, small hit, small 'dong'; big hit, big 'dong'.<sup>62</sup> Mix nativist living experience and impromptu ideas, such a speech is like a

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<sup>61</sup>. Ian Watt discusses the importance of characterisation, and points out that "the hero's consciousness is the locus of the action." "although the behaviour of the main person of the story is often rendered with a studied attention to every inflection of thought and act, they themselves are fundamentally conceived as general social and psychological types." Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), p. 294.

<sup>62</sup>. These phrases literally repeats the meaning that the content of the writer's speech depends on what is requested by his audience.

theatrical show, it leans more on physical strength and less on the substance of the content. . . .<sup>63</sup>

The writer who constantly pursues superficial media opportunities, destroys his own creativity, and in relying on his previous works for his reputation, he allows his creativity to fade away. The story draws a satirical analogy between the writer's use of his past works and the commercialisation of Taiwan. This writer sells himself as one would commercial goods; he projects the image that the audience (the buyers) desire and advertises himself in the various media by writing articles, appearing on television, and giving radio interviews. Continuing the analogy with business one can say that the point of Chu's criticism is that he does not develop new products for sale, and that as his creativity declines his business will inevitably go bankrupt:

Having fame, status and expensive life style, half his energy has to be used in managing his life. The last half of his life is destined to be spent in maintaining the style he fought for in the first half. Is this the tragedy? He sees his own speech (has been successful) like a harvest reaping people's hearts, it seems like he had just captured the devotion of a (his) young reader's heart. When he tries to concentrate the other half of his diffused (being pulled by five horses in five different directions) energy and spirit into one thing, and feeling (he) wants to accomplish something, he is then terrified to discover that his magic power has disappeared. One shortfall becomes hundreds of shortfalls. He then shows the symptoms of becoming fearful of lacking information.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>. "Huang-ju tso-jih", *SCMTHL*, p. 194.

<sup>64</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

The story moves on to deal with the topic of the writer having to submit himself to the whim of an immature new generation and the common public. The narrator links this with the concurrent decline of patriarchy, of the master, describing the writer's inability to resist the vulgarising pressures of his environment, leading to his own creative self-destruction.

"Seeming Like Yesterday" was written as the move towards democracy in Taiwan was reaching a critical point in the change from the Chiang Regime to a not yet fully defined socio-political structure. Chu's narrator does not believe that education is a matter for democracy -- it is the parents who should have the responsibility to train their children to think. The writer is portrayed in the story as deliberately passing his authority to his wife so that he can claim that he is a democratically-minded father: "He diligently polishes his sensitivity. His children regard him as a progressive adult companion, which is one of the things he is most proud of. This encourages him to closely follow the tempo of the times and never feel left behind."<sup>65</sup> It is clear that in reality, underlying this superficial show of compliance, he dislikes his children's behaviour, but, under the label of democracy, he takes up a timorous and compromising attitude. Chu portrays her writer as a victim of his own ideas about democracy, but when he tries to keep up with the democratic fashion, he deprives himself of the spirit of independence of thought, and his creative capability is vitiated. As the narrator of the story cruelly, but accurately observes:

Driving home, he felt that the situation seems like yesterday when a magic power from a measureless remote place was flashing at him, but the future

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<sup>65</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 195.

he is heading for is a repetitive, imitative, unoriginal glamorous golden new world.<sup>66</sup>

In "Seeming Like Yesterday," when Chu's writer recalls the time he spent with his first lover in Taipei during the 1960s, he also ponders on the pastoral Taipei of that time, the connection between his present and his past, the current city and the previous country town. As a Nativist writer who is meant to be close to his native land and the public, however, as he strolls into Taipei city, thinking of his pleasant memories of the old Taipei, he realises that he is walking along a muddy road surrounded by a foul-smelling crowd; and thinks to himself that he should have come in by car to avoid this unpleasantness. This further illustrates the writer's dissociation from the people and demonstrates the ambiguity of his feelings about them, which in turn reveals Chu's sceptical attitude to the likely outcome of democratic change.

#### 4.10 The City: A Splendid Facade

Chu's sensuality-chasing characters, in this collection, provide a striking example of the effects of the changes in social and sexual mores that have taken place in Taipei. However, no question of a connection between sexual pleasure and morality is really raised in these stories. In Chu T'ien-wen's previous novella "The City of Summer Heat," she suggests that sexual excess is related to advanced civilisation -- the over-ripe society. The central figure's awareness of his guilt and his feelings of shame arise from his struggle to abide by a certain moral code, or sense of values; it is this which is conspicuously lacking in the

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<sup>66</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 202.

characters in *Splendour of the End of the Century*. Chu's characters from the margins of society lack the guidance of an accepted morality. Instead of a conventional social background, they have a multimedia backdrop of continuous day and night stimulation of every kind, sensory, sensual and sexual. Chu T'ien-wen, however, does not question or pursue the possible consequences for her characters of the creation of their own individual, idiosyncratic aesthetic lives.

It is on this basis that Chu can show the understanding and sympathy that she feels for a variety of people who struggle to cope with life in an increasingly alienated urban society. It is significant that the only character for whom she shows a definite lack of sympathy is the writer, the only one who shares her own profession. We know that she would claim for herself the highest ideals as a *shih*, and can well imagine that she would wish other writers to share her standards, yet there is no inconsistency in this; her understanding for other characters is quite consistent with her view that the common people cannot reasonably be expected to share the high ideals of the *shih*.

Her early writing, as we have seen, was necessarily closely based on her experience up to that time. This later collection of stories was written at a time when she had gained substantial experience outside the college-based world depicted in her early works, and had worked for some years in the film industry in close contact with the real world outside the college campus. This experience is also revisited in the themes and material, e.g. fashion and visual arts used in the stories.

In summary, we can say that this collection shows not only an increased understanding on her part of the social structure of her society and of the political scene, but also a more sympathetic and understanding expression of individual emotions and motivations that Chu had gained since leaving the campus. It may be that, by this time, her emotional development and wider



experience also enabled her to achieve a greater sophistication in writing style to which she did not aspire in her early writings. Without this greater maturity, she would not have been able to depict sensuality of *Splendour of the End of the Century*.

In *Splendour of the End of Century*, each protagonist suffers alienation from urban society in their own way, and no general solution to loneliness in society is proposed. These protagonists (mostly mainlanders) are simply driven into their aesthetic sensual pleasure with no concern of their social obligations. In *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, one man epitomises the problem of urban sensuality through the theme of male homosexuality and the search for an identity that would be valid for humanity as a whole. In the next chapter, we shall see how Chu develops further the mature dialectic between the sexual and the social practices of the old and the new society in the novel *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*.

## Chapter V

### The Destruction of a Utopian Vision: *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*

#### 5.1 Chu's Tribute to Hu Lan-ch'eng

After *Splendour of the End of the Century*, in 1991, at thirty five years of age, Chu wrote the film script *The Puppet Master* (Hsi-meng jen-sheng).<sup>1</sup> She then decided to pay the debt that she felt she owed to Hu Lan-ch'eng. When Hu had died in 1982, among the projects left unfinished was a book about Chinese women (Chung-kuo nü-jen) in legend and history, which Hu had only managed to complete up to the Chou dynasty.<sup>2</sup> Chu did not want her tribute to Hu to advocate feminism, nor did she, unlike her sister, want to take a politically active stance.<sup>3</sup> For Chu, fiction writing would be the natural way to pay homage to Hu's memory, and so writing a novel was the obvious approach to take.

In taking up the task of writing the story of women, Chu's aim was to write a book about "female sensuality and sexuality," and covering "ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, historical and mythological sources."<sup>4</sup> It may well

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1. Chu T'ien-wen, *HJSC*, p. 236.

2. Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 75.

3. Chu T'ien-wen, *HJSC*, p. 236. Chu T'ien-hsin was appointed by the *Chung-shih wan-pao* (China Times Evening News) to write about political issues, the articles have been collected in her *Hsiao-shuo chia te cheng-chih chou-chi* (The Fiction Writer's Political Weekly Journal) (Taipei: Shih-pao wen-hua, 1994).

4. Quoted from Huang Chin-shu "Chen-chi chih-wu", in *HYCS*, 1996, pp. 277-278.

be thought that such a project would be impossible to finish in any single written work, let alone within the constraints of the novel form. Such proved to be the case, and after writing seven chapters (a total of 50,000 characters) in the period from February to September 1991 she abandoned the work, and only two chapters of the unfinished manuscript were published later under the title *The Descendant of the Sun Goddess* (Jih-shen te hou-yi).<sup>5</sup> The ostensible reason for the abandonment was that for her topic, female sexuality, she had the "idea" but not enough "flesh and blood,"<sup>6</sup> which is a Chinese idiom implying that she did not have the breadth of vision as a writer to complete the task.

The two chapters she finished read like two separate short stories, both centred on women in Taipei. The first chapter is about the stresses and strains within a group of women organised essentially as a mutually supportive sisterhood. The second is about the plight of a barren woman, and the shame and indignity she is subjected to for failing to provide her uncaring husband with sons. The historical content required by the plan for the book is provided by the then current democratisation of Taiwan society, and by reference to Chiang Kai-shek's marital record respectively.

The language of the abandoned book is more elaborate than that of any of her all previous short stories, using many classical Chinese, modern Japanese and Western references. The title for instance is derived from an ancient Japanese legend, referring to the Japanese Goddess of Civilisation. However, the absence of any detailed mythological references probably illustrates her realisation of the difficulty of the task she had set for herself. The literary significance of the project lies in the amount of material she collected, which she would use in her next work *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*.

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5. She did not publish the other chapters.

6. Huang Chin-shu "Shen-chi chih-wu", in *HYCS*, p. 277.

## 5.2 The Birth of *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*

Three years after the publication of *Descendant of the Sun Goddess*, Chu published the novel *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*. The idea for the book may have originated with Chu's conversations with a homosexual male friend, for whom Chu became the only person to whom he could talk about his sexual life and experiences.<sup>7</sup> But the novel is much more than a mere reworking of discussions with a friend, and goes beyond "Carnal Buddha"<sup>8</sup> in its frank descriptions of the sex act, and far-ranging discussion of the social anthropology of gay homosexuality. The theme of the novel is the obsession of a homosexual man with the personal and social consequences of his indulgence in a life of sensuality. Something of this is reflected in the earlier working titles she had used for the novel: "The Land of Loneliness" (Chi-mo chih hsiang), and "Sailing to an Erotic Utopia" (Hang-hsiang se-ch'ing wu-t'o-pang).<sup>9</sup> These two titles indicate the positive and negative sides of sexual indulgence: pain and pleasure, as the author puts it: "if there is a vulgar world of infatuation, (like an erotic utopia); there is an opposite world like the land of loneliness."<sup>10</sup> These provisional titles indicate the author's awareness of the ambivalence aroused by the complexities of sexual consciousness and identity.

As soon as it was published in 1994, the novel received great attention winning the first prize in the first "China Times Million NT. Dollar Award for Fiction," of which the aim was to find "today's *Dream of the Red Chamber*." In

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7. *Ibid.*, p. 277.

8. The story appears in *Splendour of the End of the Century*, see Chapter IV.

9. *HJSC*, p. 237.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

other words, a representative major work of contemporary fiction.<sup>11</sup> Chu's novel deals with homosexual love, and the winner of both the second and third prizes were also on the themes of eroticism and sexuality. The second prize being won by a novel dealing with unsatisfied female desire (Su Wei-chen's *Silent Island, Ch'en-mo te tao-yü*, 1994); and the third prize being won by a book on Sun Yat-sen's love affairs (P'ing Lu's *The Way of the World, Hsing-tao t'ien-ya*, 1994). The discourse of eroticism and sexuality was apparently the burning topic of the time. These three novels, with their sophisticated writing skill and controversial topics have become, in David Der-wei Wang's words, "the landmark novels on eroticism."<sup>12</sup> According to some newspapers, apart from the mainstream critics, Chu's novel was also discussed enthusiastically by homosexual readers; and she was invited to give talks on her novel in some of the gay bars.

As discussed in Chapter IV, many critics had already given her collected short stories *The Splendour of the End of the Century* high praise, but she felt that it showed only her technical skill as a writer, and that she needed a more testing intellectual challenge. When the novel was published, Chu participated in media discussion about her formative years, the literary influences from Hu Lan-ch'eng, and also attended a symposium at which she openly discussed her work, something which she had seldom done since her Three-Three period. The critical reception demonstrated that she had firmly established her reputation as a

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11. See Lin Wen-pei, "Hsün-chao chin-t'ien te hung-lou-meng/Tsou-ju ch'ang-p'ien hsiao-shuo te tien-t'ang: Ti-yi-chieh shih-pao wen-hsüeh pai-wan hsiao-shuo-chiang chüeh-shen chi-shih" (Looking for Today's *Dream of the Red Chamber*/Entering into the Palace of the Novel: Report of the Result of the First China Times Million NT. Dollar Award), *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), Oct. 11, 1994.

12. David Der-wei Wang, "Ai-yü hsiang-chien, ch'an-mien pu-tuan: tang-tai hsiao-shuo te ch'ing-se feng-ch'ao" (Love and Sex: The New Trend of Eroticism in Contemporary Fiction), *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), February 1, 1996, p. 39.

serious author. In 1996, she published "A Flower Remembers Her Previous Life" (1996), a lengthy autobiographical essay, in which she described Hu's influence on the Three-Three group and wrote of the satisfaction she felt in the completion of *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* in fulfilment of her commitment.<sup>13</sup>

### 5.3 Homosexuality: Genuine Subject or Stalking-Horse?

After the abandonment of *Descendant of the Sun Goddess*, it was natural for Chu, as an experienced writer of short stories, to try again to carry out her personal pledge. It is suggested that the combination of a wealth of available materials relating to aesthetics, gender and society from Hu's and Chu's research, together with her personal interest in the homosexual man combined to produce the idea of *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*. Writing about the homosexual dilemma in such a broad frame gave Chu the opportunity to discuss her own views about the way society was developing and to express her feelings about what she regarded as the decadence of the age. George Steiner gives a cogent summary of the significance of the literature of homosexuality:

Since about 1890 homosexuality has played a vital part in Western culture and, perhaps even more significantly, in the myths and emblematic gestures which that culture has used in order to arrive at self-consciousness. Artists who have covertly or publicly practised

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13. Noël Dutrait. "Four Taiwanese Writers on Themselves: Chu T'ien-wen, Su Wei-chen, Cheng Chiung-ming and Ye Ling-fang Respond to Our Questionnaire." *China Perspectives*, 17 (May/June 1998): 38. Chu declares: "the novel (*the Notebook of a Desolate Man*) is the best of all those I have written before."

paederasty and/or various modes of adult homoeroticism hold an important, at certain points predominant place in modern literature, art, music, ballet, and in the minor or decorative arts. The tonality of the "modern movement", the theories of the creative act implicit in important branches of twentieth-century arts and letters, cannot be dissociated from the lives and work of Oscar Wilde, Proust, André Gide, Stefan George, and Cocteau.<sup>14</sup>

Steiner continues by pointing out, that "From *art nouveau* to camp and Gay lib, homosexual codes and ideals are a major force. They seem to underlie, as if re-enacting their own solipsism, their own physiological and social enclosedness, that most characteristic of modern strategies."<sup>15</sup>

For Steiner, the career of Oscar Wilde gave "representative, strategic values" to homosexuality: "The homosexual overlapped with the artist in being an outsider, a grand refuser of those standards of creativity and utilitarian relationship which define middle-class, industrial post-Puritan civilisation. Homosexuality in part made possible that exercise in solipsism, that remorseless mockery of philistine common sense and bourgeois realism which is modern art."<sup>16</sup>

According to Steiner, the key features of modernism are its rejection of the outside world in favour of a self-referential art, and the aim to shock society by presenting its death-haunted erotic desire underlying homosexual strategies. I would suggest that Steiner's analysis can be applied to Chu T'ien-wen's novel.

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<sup>14</sup>. George Steiner, *A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 329-330.

<sup>15</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>16</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

Chu herself declared that her purpose in writing the novel was "to use the uniqueness of homosexuality to express my own view of sensuality and eroticism; the whole story is merely my view about life and sexuality."<sup>17</sup> She declared that "this desolate man was me."<sup>18</sup> This statement demonstrates that the novel, unlike her early work, was intended as more than a straightforward work of fiction.

As discussed below in outlining the story, the novel interweaves its narration with extended passages of philosophical discussion, which in fact take up a substantial proportion of the text. Her writing makes extensive use of flamboyant, unusual language from Chinese classical texts, Buddhist sutras and the Bible. In describing Lévi-Strauss's theory, she even cites scientific formulae, which do not normally appear in a literary novel.

The novel, which also involves the citing of passages from many other sources, ranging from the Chinese scholar Li Shu-t'ung to the Japanese film director Ozu Yasujiro has been described as "erudite" by Tsai Yüan-huang.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that these passages involve lengthy quotations from other authors' work has led to the critic Yao Yi-wei to suggest that such passages might well be considered as plagiarism, rather than as displays of erudition. Yao is severely critical: "The author is very knowledgeable and her way of showing off her erudition is to use excessive quotations from Claude Lévi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Auguste Rodin and Johann Wolfgang Goethe. She even reproduces the two pages of a list of red and green colour schemes. Personally, I feel that I have read widely enough, but am incapable of absorbing this kind of fiction.

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17. Quoted in Wang Tu-yi, "Nan-nan nü-nü te yi-chih ch'u-pan" (Men and Men, Women and Women, Esoteric Books), *Chen-p'in yüeh-tu* (Eslite Book Review), 17 (August 1994): 31.

18. *HJSC*, p. 237.

19. See "Judges' comments" in *HJSC*, p. 228.



After all, who is the reader that her novel attempts to reach? Is it the case that someone who has not yet achieved a sufficient level of knowledge should not read it?"<sup>20</sup> Yao is doubtful of the total originality of Chu's work, but as Lawrence Danson points out, "in the zone of greys that descend from absolute originality of thought through influence to derivation to copy, the matter is more complex." Danson was arguing the case of Oscar Wilde, who was pursued by accusations of plagiarism, and concluded that Wilde was using "objective materials" to express his "subjective thoughts."<sup>21</sup>

However, unlike Wilde, no one can suggest that Chu T'ien-wen attempted to conceal the sources that formed the basis of her philosophical discussion, but she did take the various explanatory models she discussed a step further than did their originators in order to help understanding of the relationship of the homosexual to the conventional structure of society.

As Lin Yi-yün points out, since Chu describes "an independent world," it is "natural that Chu mixes the story with theory in depicting the sensual experiences of homosexuals." She argues that while the analyses of Lévi-Strauss or Foucault "can be omitted, Chu's ideas become more clear by using them."<sup>22</sup> Although the philosophical content of the novel is considerable, the way in which Chu applies the theoretical interpolation to the story of her character is itself a major stylistic achievement.

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<sup>20</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>21</sup>. See Lawrence Danson, "Wilde as critic and theorist," in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), P.88-89.

<sup>22</sup>. See Lin Yi-yün, "P'ai-shan tao-hai erh lai: *Huang-jen shou-chi tu-hou*" (Overwhelming: On *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*), *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), Nov. 17, 1994, p. 39.

Chu uses Lévi-Strauss's theory because she herself thinks that his structuralism, including his so called science of mythology, is the equivalent of Hu's theory of the origin of Chinese political civilisation (Li-yüeh wen-ming).<sup>23</sup> In my view, it was from the threat the Chu saw in contemporary Taiwan to this concept of Hu's, which Chu called the ideal "golden structure" (huang-chin chieh-kou)<sup>24</sup> that the origin of her writing decadence can be traced.

In Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, homosexuality is not included in the structure of the human family system, and symbolises a decay within that system, in other words, a failing of the social order that Hu advocated. Chu's purpose in depicting an obsessive homosexuality was to relate it to the conventional heterosexual world, and the work becomes her most considered reflection on her paradoxical search for a social function for a non-reproductive social group, the homosexuals. Chu's obsessive homosexual also shows a strong attachment to the idea of a conventional married life. It can be said that in the novel, the extravagant pursuit of indulgent sexuality is represented as parallel to the search for security of a place in the ordered structure of traditional society. Before we proceed to the discussion of the use of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault's theories, we will outline the course of the novel forming the background to the protagonist's thoughts.

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<sup>23</sup>. *HYCS*, p. 69.

<sup>24</sup>. *HJSC*, p. 55.

#### 5. 4 Outline and Structure of the Novel

Chu makes much use of ethnographic theory, religious dogma and mythology, which make up almost half of the book. Since her discussion tends to be somewhat dense in content, here I will indicate only its broad nature.

In the novel Chu describes the homosexual protagonist's reflections on his life and sexual relationships. The novel begins with the protagonist/narrator, Hsiao-Shao's statement that he and human society are corrupted: "This is the prophesied age of decadence (t'ui-fei). I am bound to it and have sunk to the bottom with it. I use my naked body in the most corrupting way that can be accepted by human society."<sup>25</sup>

Chapter One establishes the sense of guilt from which the protagonist is to seek redemption in the course of the novel. He says that after a life of indulgence, at forty years old, he has nothing to show except a feeling of the loneliness and barrenness of his life. Since he does not believe in God he cannot attempt to emulate the famous monk/writer Hung-yi fa-shih (Li Shu-t'ung) who led a colourful life and retired to become a contented monk in middle age. All that the narrator has is the fear of death.

The narrator goes on, in Chapter Two, to recall the occasion when his best friend, A-yao, whose deathbed he is now attending, made what he realised only later were explicit homosexual overtures to him. In fact, although their relationship remained platonic, the relationship is a key link for the narrator between his innocence and his carnality. Unlike the protagonist, A-yao is a homosexual activist, who regards the search for "redemption" as "the worst guilt."<sup>26</sup> Since he is already "licentious" and will "go to hell," he will not concern

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<sup>25</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

himself with questions of guilt. A-yao affirms his homosexual identity, using English, as a "queer" -- contrasting with the more usual usage of "gay."

A-yao's death, however, prompts the protagonist to think about the meaning of life, death, and existence. He concludes that the physical body passes away, death is death, and there is no question of eternity. The only memory for posterity of the homosexual is the preservation of any written record of his existence, he quotes the Chinese idiom "when a tiger dies, it leaves its skin; when a man dies, he leaves his name."<sup>27</sup>

The nature of homosexual relationships is discussed in Chapter Five by reference to the views of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Michel Foucault. The structuralist view of society as taken by Lévi-Strauss and Foucault is used in the discussion of moral guilt and redemption. The narrative moves on to the specific case of the personal commitment that the protagonist has made to his current and long-standing partner Yung-chieh, implicitly comparing the insecurity of a homosexual relationship with the security of a socially recognised, official marriage. In Chapter Seven, his partner has gone away on business and the lonely narrator thinks about the virtues of loyalty to his partner. He then indulges in an extended monologue on aesthetics.

In Chapter Eight, the narrator is enchanted by the physical beauty of a youth he meets in a café for whom he feels intense sexual desire. The youth, in fact, is completely disinterested in the narrator. The beauty of the boy leads him into a discussion of the nature of feminine attractiveness; and hence, about the nature of his own gender/sexuality, and, more generally, about the essential differences between femininity (yin) and masculinity (yang).

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<sup>27</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

In Chapter Nine, Hsiao-Shao is lost in his own romantic nostalgia about his first love, the dancer Chieh, who left him. This is a prelude to his desire to form a permanent relationship as a path to redemption.

The narrator's recollections of the dancer Chieh continues into Chapter Ten. He remembers that Chieh had told him that he should regard the sexual act as though he were practising a Buddhist exercise. He says, "Sex endows enlightenment and knowledge apart from pleasure or reproduction,"<sup>28</sup> implying that the torment he is suffering should become part of the process of seeking enlightenment.

In Chapter Eleven, Hsiao-Shao has become a lecturer at a university, dissatisfied with his life of indulgence in the city, he decides that marriage is the only path to redemption open to him. The woman he proposes to marry is his friend Pei-pei. The difficult situation of the middle classes in everyday life is discussed -- the crowded living conditions, overworking, family pressures from older and younger generations, and financial problems. In this chapter Chu uses the social position of women to introduce a discussion of the views of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault.

With Chapter Twelve, the protagonist regrets the gap between conventional middle-class society and the homosexual sub-culture of Taipei. The narrator now expresses his hope that he will be able to maintain his relationship with his partner and to live a peaceful, ordinary life. But the implication is that such an existence would be the equivalent of moribund, since homosexual partnership is not recognised by society.

In Chapter Thirteen the protagonist and his partner have now set up their own homosexual household together; this is compared with his sister's conventional family. The travels of the narrator and his partner serve as the peg

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<sup>28</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

on which to hang discussions not only of Islam, but also of some of the feminine oriented religious rites and festivals of Japan; and the rules of succession to the monarchy in ancient Egypt.

In describing his feelings about national ceremonial and homosexual activism in Chapter Fourteen, he contrasts the peace, grandeur and sublimity of the former with the rebelliousness, wildness, and lack of respect for ancestors of the latter. He recalls his first lover Chieh and believes that the dancer dies three times, the first when the beauty of the body passes, and the second when his dancing fails, before he finally dies physically.

In the last chapter, a cremation on the bank of the Ganges during a trip to India is the occasion for a discussion of the Buddhist way to enlightenment. With that, the story goes on to end in Taipei with the narrator sitting in his room thinking that A-yao is just the first of his friends to die. He decides to continue writing about his friends so that he will not forget them.

This general introduction to the novel illustrates the prominence in the novel of the investigation that Chu is undertaking of the relation between the homosexual and the conventional worlds. The theoretical basis she chooses as an heuristic device is the work of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault. Their works, centring on the concepts of structure and power in society, is particularly appropriate for her discussion of the position of a socially unacceptable, non-conforming sub-group of society.

### **5.5 The Use of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault**

The theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Michel Foucault are used to express the narrator's concern about the nature of his position within the

conventional order of society, and involves the extension of Lévi-Strauss and Foucaults' views on the structure of society to encompass homosexuality. Chu's protagonist is not only a university lecturer, but, like Chu, a writer. This, and the fact that the discussion is interpolated into the narrative almost as separate sections makes it convenient and plausible to regard the protagonist in the section as speaking for Chu, as well as for himself. The narrator is engaged in an attempt to define the place of the homosexual in the structure of society, his situation in the network of rights and duties that determine the nature of the individuals, relationships with members of his family; and the freedoms, restrictions and obligations consequent on his sexuality. In the context of the protagonist's search by soliloquy, the views of the two eminent French theorists are used as a frame, since the views of these two have modified over the years, this discussion will be based on their views as used in the novel.

According to the protagonist, Lévi-Strauss argues that it is marriage which is the basic social contract, the terms of which determine the structure of the networks of human relationships and social institutions in a society. The protagonist uses Lévi-Strauss's study of an aboriginal tribe in Brazil which concluded that those who had no children could not be accorded the status of tribal ancestor after death. He extends this finding to argue that for the homosexual, "fate has already been decided," whether alive or dead, he has no social position.<sup>29</sup>

Chu's narrator regards Lévi-Strauss as the most authoritative view on anthropological questions, and is concerned about the implications for homosexuals of Lévi-Strauss's view that marriage can "explain" human society. The narrator asks: "What is it, after all, to be a person who has no part in deciding his own existence? If I change myself, would it mean that I would be

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<sup>29</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

denying my own nature? What is the meaning of my existence if I repudiate myself?"<sup>30</sup>

Foucault, on the other hand, comes to a different conclusion. Whereas for Lévi-Strauss the individual's nature determines his belonging to a societal grouping, for Foucault, the assigning of an individual to a group tends to determine his behaviour because of the exertion of the social norms of the group. It may not be an oversimplification to say that, whereas Lévi-Strauss argues that heterosexuals get married because they are male/female; Foucault's argument could suggest that married people are heterosexual because they are married. The bifurcation into male and female, no matter which author we are considering, exerts great power in society.

Foucault, perhaps because he was homosexual, argued that in the real world, such terms as "nature" and "sex" are used merely as a normative base for the differentiation of the normal from the abnormal in order to provide a basis for law and regulation of behaviour. Foucault therefore regards the use of such concepts as "nature" and "sex" as tools for the exercise of power. He concerns himself not with the "why" of societal institutions, but with the "how," preferring to look at the detailed way in which a concept, such as sex, exerts its power by a study of the operation of related social institutions.<sup>31</sup> For our current purpose we may simplify the difference between the two of them as follows: the implication of the Lévi-Strauss model is that since institutions arise from the "nature" of individuals, they are not capable of modification. However, in the Foucault model it is the institution which determines the "nature" of the individual. This model opens the possibility of allowing greater flexibility to

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<sup>30</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup>. See "Introduction," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 5



individuals in the redefinition of normality. This is the course followed by a group of activist homosexuals, who call themselves "queers" -- a term intended to refer to all non-heterosexual of whatever orientation. The intention is to achieve social recognition and power for a third "sex."

The narrator not only shares Foucault's (view of) sexuality, but also his personal interest in opposing the social control exerted by conventional value systems. He believes that Foucault himself "refuses to let his turbulent inner self, his homosexual identity be managed." "Foucault hates psychologists and laughs at them as people who rent (use) their ears to grasp sexual secrets and are the first to succumb to sexual excitement." Whenever Foucault feels society wants to control his sexuality, "he feels agitated and disturbed, thinking hard how to fight back."<sup>32</sup>

Nonetheless, Hsiao-Shao appears as cautious and prudent, and not committed to the political usefulness of homosexual activism. He considers the drawbacks of the realisation of an "erotic utopia" -- the indulgence of sexual appetites without consideration of any social obligation. The sense of individual satisfaction loses some of its meaning when threatened by the dark shadow of AIDS. Hsiao-Shao feels the appeal of the structure presented by Lévi-Strauss -- "the organised, mathematical world of Bach's music," "everything has its place," and there is no need to search or dispute." He considers that since Lévi-Strauss's structuralism has the answer for everything, it "becomes a style of living, a profound, settled and graceful existence."<sup>33</sup>

It may be noted that it is this fifth chapter of *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* that Chu chose to represent the novel in a recent collection of her work, *A Flower Remembers Her Previous Life*. Although Chu did not give any reason

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<sup>32</sup>. *HJSC*, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

for her selection, she was very enthusiastic in discussing Claude Lévi-Strauss and the book by Didier Eribon, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss* in her own memoir.<sup>34</sup> Lévi-Strauss, moreover, did not feel in his own personal life the certainty of identity that would be implied by his theories:

If you don't have this feeling of personal identity, you must work all the harder to regain your self-possession when moving out of exceptional circumstances. Ethnographic experience is an experimental form of research on something which escapes you. If I had a strong idea of who I was, perhaps I wouldn't have needed to go looking for myself in these exotic adventures.<sup>35</sup>

This echoes the feelings of Hsiao-Shao in his self-inquisition: what is it that is eluding him as a homosexual? The answer, Hsiao-Shao concludes, is that it is marriage and family that he misses.

A-yao, on the other hand, is represented as someone who believes that because normality is judged according to the interests of the ruling group, and cannot be appropriate for minority groups, the necessary course of action is to follow the logic of Foucault's argument and assert the "normality" of "queer;" thus, he uses the term "queer" in referring to himself, and takes part enthusiastically in homosexual demonstrations all over the world.

To encapsulate the frameworks of the two theorists as represented in the narrative, we may say that in the novel, it is suggested that both Lévi-Strauss and Foucault each provide a utopian world, the former's is moral and

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<sup>34</sup> *HYCS*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>35</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss and Didier Eribon, *Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*, Trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991), p. 168.

conventional, the latter's permissive and unconventional. Through A-yao, the novel goes along with Foucault's doctrine of an unrestrained "erotic utopia" involving radical individualism, sensualism and conspicuous consumption which enables homosexuals to claim a place in society.

### 5.6 Homosexuality: Queer or Gay?

The contrast between the views of Lévi-Strauss and Foucault is used by the narrator describing a debate between himself and A-yao concerning the socio-sexual implications of the terms gay and queer, as seen from the conventional, heterosexual and the non-conventional, homosexual view points.

First, let us look at the passage which consists of the narrator's indication of the differences between "queer" and "gay":

Queer, that so-called comrade. This brand new homosexuality, proudly cut off from the old days. There is no continuity between the age of Pre-AIDS and Post-AIDS. The qualitative difference is such that it amounts to a new regime, which needs a new accurate name. So it is necessary to make one thing clear, it (homosexuality) is not to be gay, but to be queer. A-yao says, queer, what about it, I am this word. Our type and your type are basically different, what is the point in discussing the difference.<sup>36</sup>

It is clear that A-yao envisages a new world which he thinks will have no reference back to the old one. But Hsiao-Shao, although he is a homosexual, needs to maintain a link to the conventional social structure that the use of "gay"

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<sup>36</sup>. *HJSC*, p. 39.

implies, as the narrator says: "A-yao uses his sarcastic eyes to look at me, Oh, you are happy? His smile without a word can easily irritate me. He already cast away the word "gay," like a pair of worn-out shoes, but I still wear this formal, out-dated top hat which appears stupid and laughable."<sup>37</sup>

Unlike A-yao who will remain a politically committed homosexual, no matter what price he has to pay, Hsiao-Shao is a person of reason and resignation, rather than rebellion. The narrator would be too embarrassed to struggle openly for public recognition in a meeting:

When A-yao stands up saying: I am a queer, this is it! I feel I would like to jump up, wrap his body with a blanket and push him off the platform. Young people have the freshness of their youth, A-yao, you and me, pieces of distasteful skin, why should we exhibit ourselves?<sup>38</sup>

As Liu Liang-ya has pointed out, in writing of the desire for "outward acceptance by society," Chu's novel would not be acceptable to those who take the more aggressive attitude, typically those who describe themselves as "queer."<sup>39</sup> As a fighter for homosexual rights, A-yao never hides his passion for homosexuality even in front of his mother, though he knows his mother regards it as deviant. He even caused his mother heartache by asking his lovers to come to his home to have sex. Hsiao-shao, on the contrary, always respects A-yao's mother and never intruded his views on her life. The implication of the use of

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<sup>37</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>39</sup>. Liu Liang-ya, "Pai-tang tsai hsien-tai yü hou-hsien-tai chih-chien: Chu T'ien-wen chin-ch'i tso-p'in chung te kuo-tsu, shih-tai, hsing-pieh, ch'ing-yü wen-t'i" (Wavering between Modern and Post-modern: Issues of Race, Generation, Gender and Sexuality in Chu T'ien-wen's Recent Works), in *Chung-wai wen-hsüeh*, 24. I (1996): 16.

"gay" and "queer" are discussed in the novel from different aspects and at different levels, as I shall discuss in the following sections.

### **5.7 Homosexuality: Sublime or Depraved?**

Another perspective on the opposition between heterosexuality and homosexuality is the view that homosexual love is less real than heterosexual love. Since it has no concern with the family and procreation, it can be said to be "sex for the sake of sex," an aesthetic performance. For instance, the narrator's first lover, Chieh admires a fellow dancer not only because he is an affectionate lover, but for his beauty and talent in dancing. In Chieh's eyes, he is a perfect dancer, his body like a "Greek sculpture," "naked and beautiful."<sup>40</sup> Chieh's attitude towards sex is totally aesthetic as if he is appreciating a work of art.

Adopting Chieh's attitude, the narrator is somewhat attracted to the idea of an aesthetic homosexual looking for lavish sexual pleasure. Most of the time he rationalises his many love affairs as a search for beauty, thus avoiding any moral obligation. His encounters with his lovers are described as purely sensual: the whole process of seeking love is "like finding a way through the labyrinth of the cosmos."<sup>41</sup>

On the other hand, his homosexuality, because of its continual indulgence with different partners, can also be described as debauched. The constant changing of lovers suggests that they are being treated as sex objects to be used and discarded. He idealises his lovers as fashion models or movie stars rather

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<sup>40</sup>. *HJSC*, p. 140.

<sup>41</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

than as real people, which shows that the narrator is driven solely by the desire for sex, not the desire to form a relationship, for instance:

He is the cool and mysteriously beautiful boy in the BANANA REPUBLIC fashion poster. He is the handsome man in the commercial for Lévi-Strauss SILVER TAB jeans, bare chested in jeans with his hair neatly combed. He is the opponent in a fantastic daydream, together (we) reach the furthest borders to which the imagination can expand.<sup>42</sup>

The narrator's most intense fantasy is when he encounters Fei Tuo, a beautiful boy, and views the boy simply as an exquisite objet d'art. Fei Tuo, a rich kid, self- and socially- alienated, having no close friend and not wanting any, realises that the narrator is homosexual, and mischievously plays him along by using his beauty to take advantage of him. When the narrator begins to feel a strong physical desire for the boy, the boy calls him: "PAPA."<sup>43</sup> However, lust overwhelms him, the delicate voice of the boy makes it sound like music, and he does not realise that the boy is actually satirically calling him father.

The radiance of the boy intoxicates Hsiao-Shao, his mind and heart drunk with passion, lost in a trance, he blindly follows the boy only to find himself gambling and losing at electronic games. He soon imagines himself living in the decaying years of "the last century" in thrall to the death-haunted "myth of love."<sup>44</sup> The description of Hsiao-Shao's love for the young boy echoes Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice" in which a tired middle-aged writer falls madly for a young boy called Tadzio. When Hsiao-Shao himself sees Fei Tuo, he pictures

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<sup>42</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>43</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>44</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

himself like Mann's protagonist Aschenbach meeting the young boy, Tadzio: "Tadzio is the flower of pure seduction which is nourished by death and sex."<sup>45</sup>

The intensity of his lust impels the narrator to follow Fei Tuo to his home. Fei Tuo does not respond sexually at all and asks another boy to come to play with his electronic game at his home. When the other boy comes, the narrator is actually ignored by the two boys, who concentrate on their game. He then watches T.V, which happens to be showing an old Italian film, reminding him of people of his own generation, such as A-yao, and their adolescent years of happiness. At this moment, suddenly he realises the generation gap between him and the boy. Feeling extremely humiliated, he leaves the boy's home without saying good-bye.

The narrator is overwhelmed by the similarity of his experience with Fei Tuo to those described by Thomas Mann. But the similarity is not complete; because, whereas Mann's protagonist does not attempt to control Tadzio, Chu's narrator feels humiliated after his unsuccessful attempt to control the object of his desire:

A-yao and I, Yung-chieh and I, we are members of a generation who are consigned to the margins of society, usually, we are abandoned in the wild, desolated field of our inner self before submitting to the judgement of the society. How disgraceful, that I let myself enter that room, allowing Fei Tuo heartlessly to degrade me.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>46</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

The narrator's physical passion for the boy is replaced by an awareness that the boy's beauty is unattainable, and by despair over the humiliation caused by his sensual indulgence in perverted seductions.

Physical pleasure and mental serenity are short lived for Hsiao-Shao, humiliation and despair are never far from him. The narrator, after breaking up with the dancer, has a one night stand with an old man, who is referred to as the "tall skinny one" (Kao-shou-tzu). He has a macabre impression of this old man -- "a make-up artist for corpses."<sup>47</sup> As he sees the old man pick up young drunk homosexuals in an attempt to relive his youth, the narrator expresses his horror at seeing the old man's behaviour:

His ugly body which has been destroyed before its time by his indulgence, his ravaged face looks as though it has been ploughed by the plague. He cannot have any (sexual) opportunity at all.<sup>48</sup>

The old man is like a "vampire" who enters the human world in order to destroy it. The mental sickness of the man's addiction to the beauty of young men is vividly shown throughout the episode. He is portrayed as an evil man who cannot release himself from the darkness of his desire, and serves as an object lesson for the narrator: "Only, in his floating time, he might be able to pick up a drunk doll and take him home to look at: What a beautiful body. Before long, the body will grow a thick skin. He would like to capture the moment before the body decays."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>48</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>49</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 143.



Seeing this old man stirs the narrator's memory of A-yao. He recalls having once seen A-yao with a scar on his face, he wonders if A-yao had been abused by someone: "Had he been stabbed? Sexual abuse? Does the experience of being abused make him happy? Details, details, I really want to know the details. Entwined with hundreds of sexual fantasies and nightmares, I am willing to yield to such powerful curiosity. . . ." <sup>50</sup>

Apart from the problem of personal sexual humiliation, the narrator also experiences misery when what he thought was a relationship of love develops into merely one of sex for money. One of his lovers, whom he referred to as "Shih," has borrowed some money from him and does not want to repay. He suggests to the narrator that he pays the debt by having sex with him. The narrator is unhappy about his proposition but is unable to bring himself to refuse. However, afterwards, he no longer feels affection for Shih, and feels betrayed and ashamed that their relationship has turned into one of prostitution. The narrator says sadly: "People cheating people is like a drama. I am still willing to play my part, how does it all come to go sour." <sup>51</sup>

In the novel, the homosexual's sexual activity is said to be as excessive as that of the Biblical "Sodom." <sup>52</sup> In his indulgent life, the protagonist's guilt at his homosexuality finds its expression in incipient masochism. For instance, some descriptions of his sexual enjoyment are combined with the images of punishment. On one occasion he has sex with a man whose heavy metal accessories evoke a strong image of a prisoner, and the sound of the chains reminds the narrator of an "instrument of torture." <sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>51</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>52</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>53</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

In his sadness, he cannot even find a friend from his address book to whom he can talk about his life. All his refined sensuality does not bring him comfort but only makes him feel infected. His sexual relationships are tightly bound by an endless sequence of affection and humiliation, togetherness and separation. These are seen against the protagonist's seething discontent and frustration. As a result of this, his need for spirituality grows stronger and stronger. The narrator describes the significance of his interaction with A-yao, their conversation "consists of matters of substance, which makes him (A-yao) feel that he is still a human being not an animal."<sup>54</sup> Such a statement is also applicable to the narrator himself, for without the symbol of innocence, A-yao's friendship, he has no way to confirm his existential meaning.

### **5.8. The Homosexual: Moralist or Immoralist?<sup>55</sup>**

An extended discussion is presented of the barrier that is placed between the homosexual and the formation of conventional social relationships. For the narrator, the practice of homosexuality is like "a people's commune of boundless hedonists. Its principle is, no reproduction, no kinship, no human relationship."<sup>56</sup> The narrator points out that some nations allow homosexuals to

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.

<sup>55</sup> The "Immoralist" has been used as the English translation of the title of *L'Immoraliste* by Gide. See André Gide, *The Immoralist*, trans. Dorothy Bussy (London: Penguin Books, 1960). Although the term is not in the Oxford English Dictionary, for the purpose of the discussion here, "moralist" refers to one who believes in traditional family morality, while "immoralist" refers to one who does not submit to the traditional values of the family and violates the moral expectations of society-- in accordance with the way in which Gide uses the term.

<sup>56</sup> Chu T'ien-wen, *HJSC*, p. 145.

get married, but they cannot adopt children. It seems that one-to-one physical sex is the only thing that homosexual men can share, since they are not allowed the personal relationships that go with marriage. The narrator expresses his sorrow that he and Chieh cannot communicate the way heterosexual couple can:

I don't know where is the studio he goes to, who are his colleagues, his social group or his family. Between him and me, there is no social network, only love. Love befogs my eyes, I thought this house and this bed made up a world. Suddenly, on this one day, the fog clears, I am left standing alone in the wild grass, our happy, splendid house is actually a green cemetery.<sup>57</sup>

This desolate image shows that there is a barrier between the narrator and Chieh that is as impenetrable as if they were in different worlds. It also demonstrates the frustration of homosexual love in not offering the chance of a normal family social life. Though having the freedom to indulge himself, without a network of social relationships, the protagonist comes to realise that:

Because I am so exhausted of having such an unlimited, constant feast of sex that my (more) refined tastes are used up. My point of ignition (arousal) is so high that it is impossible to reach it without using a strong dose (stimulus). . . the anxiety of losing my sexual power, I am afraid that one day T. S. Eliot's prophetic poem will be realised: I made love, but feel nothing.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>58</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Wearying of his indulgent life style, the narrator considers the possibility of escaping by marrying his long-term female friend, Pei-peí. However, at this point, he will not admit to himself that he is irredeemably homosexual, and in his enthusiasm in chasing Pei-peí, he appears to have no concern over what his sexual identify really is. His lack of concern for her as a person shows that he is treating her as an object of importance only in relation to himself.

Although the narrator deceives himself in wanting to get married and have a normal middle class life style, he is at the same time scared of what it would mean. For instance, Pei-peí works hard for her independence, but to the narrator her life seems unhealthy. He considers her working environment to be as distorted as that of his "tribe of homosexuals."<sup>59</sup> In Chu's vision of the homosexual, between A-yao's world of activism, and the narrator's world of isolation, no decent or comfortable, quiet middle class family life is possible.

Even though the narrator regards the conventional middle-class life style as far from ideal, he finally comes to seek peace in his union with Yung-chieh by means of a symbolic wedding. This takes place in their imaginations as they stand together in a church in Rome. Chu describes a vision of a spectacular ceremony at which the narrator expresses his willingness to be loyal to Yung-chieh and his hope for a stable future relationship: "Since it is the case that we are fated to have no place in the human (conventional) marriage system, then, in this place, this circular domed church, designed by Michelangelo who started the construction, and which took one hundred years to finish, we affirm our marriage commitment."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>60</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 77. The church referred is St. Peter's in Rome. Construction started in 1506 under Bramante. In 1546, Michelangelo tookover and designed the dome. The church was completed in 1629. *Insight Guide: Rome* (Singapore: APA Publications GmbH & Co., 1998), p.141.

The wedding scene is fantasy fulfilment, controversial because it shows the homosexual narrator, becoming a "husband" in a "traditional" marriage. The compelling quality of the scene derives from the fact that the imaginary wedding enables the fulfilment of his fantasies. The first, that of imposing his will on the church and society that would reject him, by gaining the accepted place in society that a "marriage" partner would give him. The second fantasy, that of obtaining the mental security that would come from a mutual marriage commitment to a partner. The use of fantasy fulfilment demonstrates the paradoxical nature of his demands that are in reality irreconcilable.

The narrator's stable relationship with his long-term partner makes him favour the elements of ritual conducted in pure, sacred temples, in particular for places evoking strong classical and mythological feelings, such as Egyptian temples. He appears to be a moral person, viewing the world with a sense of order and rhythm, a feeling of ritual and refinement. He appreciates his partner Yung-chieh's choreographic movements: "He puts his fingers on his lips, meaning kiss you, he goes on walking back, like a dancer acknowledging applause on stage at the end of the show, walks back to the corner and disappears."<sup>61</sup> The courtesy of Yung-chieh shows his feelings of honour and respect for the narrator, which gives the narrator genuine joy. The "marriage" commitment leads the narrator to take a different perspective on his life, and to devote himself totally to his partner and to wish for a long life together. Viewing ancient buildings or looking at archaeological remains in museums is no longer just an aesthetic experience, but becomes a reminder of the inevitability of death. The narrator's desire for a healthy body is no longer an expression of his desire for sexual stamina, but of his wish to avoid death and increase his chances of a long relationship with his partner. The urge to keep fit has become an attempt to

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<sup>61</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, *HJSC*, p. 171.

evade death. He eagerly exchanges fitness regimes and health tips with his homosexual friends, and seeks peace in body and mind by practising hypnotism: "Kao Ying-wu and I harmoniously discuss intimate tips for keeping healthy, like the lucky survivors of a shipwreck, swapping experiences while drifting towards the shore."<sup>62</sup>

Because of his commitment to his relationship with Yung-chieh, the narrator becomes concerned about accepted moral values, he realises that he has neglected his family during his debauched life. In one passage, his re-discovery of his feelings for his sister is mixed with feelings of guilt: "Since then, she has grown her hair to the waist. I had forgotten her so long, will she hate me? We used to be so close to each other when we were young."<sup>63</sup>

With anguish, he recalls that during his break with Chieh, he did not really care about his own family. His love affair seemed more important than hearing about his father's death.<sup>64</sup> Knowing that he has isolated himself, he feels now the need for contact with his family, and his sister becomes very important to him. In one episode, we see the narrator and his partner, together with his sister's family enjoying a holiday by the sea. One scene describes the narrator and his partner going snorkelling, using a traditional Chinese image for lovers, they are compared to "a pair of soles" surrounded by a shoal of "bright, lovely, yellow flat fish" which echo their happiness.<sup>65</sup> It would appear that the narrator has already achieved his homosexual utopia. However, a sensual relationship is only half of his vision. The other half is of:

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<sup>62</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>63</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>64</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>65</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 186.

The most glorious moment in my life. My sister's whole family is relaxing, having a picnic by the sea, while Yung-chieh and I play under the sea. This is the utopia which we worked hard to produce. The picture of eternity.<sup>66</sup>

But this picture only conceals the reality of the absurdity of the narrator's attempt to create an image of harmony between his partner and his family. Homosexuals are people who by their nature have to leave the conventional family structure, abandon traditional Chinese morality and Lévi-Strauss's "golden structure," which posits the family as the basic element of social structure.

We are told that his sister does not like Yung-chieh, and her husband does not really talk to the narrator. To be physically close to his sister does not mean that he is accepted by the family. Later in the novel, he likens himself, to Susano-o, from Japanese mythology, the "betrayed" brother of the Japanese Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, who leaves his family and establishes his own regime.<sup>67</sup> In view of his attempts to regain contact with his family, the comparison is somewhat far-fetched. Nevertheless, at the heart of the novel is the narrator's grief for the "destruction" of a "traditional family" utopia, to which, once he realises his homosexuality, he cannot return. The narrator's sorrow makes him look back with sadness to his own family.

The world of homosexuals is compared by the narrator to the nether world of *yin* in contrast to the human world of *yang*, once again emphasising the withdrawal and separation which makes the protagonist an outcast from the

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158 and p. 187. The story is derived from *The Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters), written in 712 AD, relates the myth of the creation, foundation and unification of the Japanese nation. *The Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters), trans. Donald L. Philippi (Tokyo: University of Tokyo University, 1968).

heterosexual world. The yin/yang polarity is developed further in the novel in discussing Nature and gender, as discussed next.

### 5.9 The Quest for the Nature of *Yin/Yang*

Chu's interest in the application of *yin/yang* to science has been heavily influenced by Hu Lan-ch'eng. In his "The Five Basic Laws of Nature" (originally called "Study of Nature, Culture, Science, and Philosophy," the new title is perhaps less grandiose than the original, but still ambitious for any writer) he claimed that his thought, based on the ideas of Japanese mathematicians and physicists, combined the ideas of science and philosophy to interpret the principle of the cosmos.<sup>68</sup>

Hu's view was that the difference between the civilised (*wen-ming*) and the primitive (*wu-ming*) periods was in the use of science, especially mathematics and physics. Fortunately, we do not have to concern ourselves with the correctness of Hu's views *per se*, only in as far as their influence on Chu T'ien-wen is concerned. Hu regarded biology and physics as "incomplete," believing that the Chinese *yin* and *yang* provided the missing theoretical framework: "The difference between organic and inorganic, the living object and the dead object is denied. In Nature, there is only energy in two forms, *yin* and *yang*."<sup>69</sup> Chu tended to follow Hu in seeking understanding through the use of polarised

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<sup>68</sup>. See Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 70. I have also discussed some of these aspects in Chapter I.

<sup>69</sup>. Hu Lan-ch'eng, *Chien-kuo hsin-shu* (New Ideas for Building the Nation) (Taipei: Yüan-liu, 1991), p. 40.



opposites: order and disorder, life and death, male and female, heterosexual and homosexual.

The narrator attempts to resolve his own gender identity by asking what it is that defines *yin* (feminine) and *yang* (masculine). A-yao's mother symbolises femininity -- silenced and emptied of her individuality; the Japanese passive, devoted mother figure provides the narrator's ideal of womanhood. We see A-yao's Japanese mother waiting motionless like a statue. The narrator admires the inner strength of such women, saying, "Instead of searching for the secret of the massive power of the Japanese economy, it would be better to understand the crucial role of Japanese women."<sup>70</sup> While feeding his pet fish, the narrator feels that he has himself been granted life by a decidedly feminine form of grace, the "earth mother."<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in describing Chieh's male lover, who is unwilling to subordinate himself to any man, the narrator emphasises his similarity to a Japanese actress "innocent," and "with a confident smile to men."<sup>72</sup>

Superficially, the quotations above about the passive strength of women might suggest a strong preference of the narrator for the feminine, which would implicitly show Chu's feminine consciousness.<sup>73</sup> However, there are no specifically sexual connotations in the description of women's qualities, and Chu's portrayal of the male aesthete (the narrator) represents an attempt to fuse into a single, superior being the polarities of active and passive, *yin* and *yang*, and male and female: "He is a unity, soul and body, never to be parted. At his

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<sup>70</sup> *HJSC*, p. 159.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>73</sup> In the novel, Chu rewrites the myth in Genesis: "It is Adam who eats the forbidden fruit and who begins the differentiation." Chu affirms the power of Eve as a Goddess, and the significance of Eve by saying "The sadness of the Goddess becomes the sign of our lost Garden of Eden." See *HJSC*, pp. 98, 99.

peak, he is like any dancer haughty and boastful. . . The dancer worships his own body, stares silently at himself, looks at his own shadow and falls narcissistically in love with himself. He is like the American Indian song, suddenly the front is beautiful, suddenly the right is beautiful, suddenly the left, I am walking in the midst of beauty. I am beauty."<sup>74</sup> This androgyny refers to the Biblical period before the Fall, a world of utopian innocence and happiness, which change into sexual awareness and sin. The sense of the androgyny in Chu's novel is placed against this background of a mythical golden age: there is no sense of duality before the fall of Adam and Eve. In this sense, androgyny symbolises wholeness and perfection.

However, the novel suggests that the self-sufficiency and narcissism of androgyny has its negative aspects. One episode of particular interest is that of Fei Tuo. After meeting Fei Tuo, the narrator senses a threat and is afraid of the reverse side of Fei Tuo's androgynous youthful energy, his self-sufficiency and narcissism, described by the narrator as being that of a "femme fatale"<sup>75</sup> and "little imp."<sup>76</sup>

When he thinks of the boy as a woman, the narrator gets to the point of imagining that he himself is becoming more female and describes himself as androgynous.<sup>77</sup> And yet, as an androgynous homosexual, the narrator realises that he cannot have a child, as he anxiously says: "Yes, femininity. But we lack the ability to have a child, neither do we have the virtue of improving people's living conditions."<sup>78</sup> The narrator, stimulated by his fantasy of becoming a woman is emotionally crushed when it is deflated by Pei-peï's view that in reality,

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<sup>74</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>75</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>76</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>77</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>78</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

in modern society, there is a trend towards homosexuality. According to Pei-peí there is repression of the heterosexual impulse, because women are becoming too lazy or too busy to make love. In response to the situation described by Pei-peí, the narrator is worried about the heterosexual world would turning into a homosexual world: "What if men are no longer inconstant, no longer gamble on love because they cannot be bothered, or are too tired, or have no time, or for whatever reason are not interested? All women then will become silent and lonely."<sup>79</sup> The underlying concern of the narrator is with the fate of humanity, because if males move towards homosexuality, eventually mankind will become extinct.

Lévi-Strauss in his book *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* argues that the circulation of women is the central aspect of kinship.<sup>80</sup> Chu's narrator believes that it is the basic brick of human social structure, and cites Lévi-Strauss's view that "marriage is not a private thing."<sup>81</sup> The trend towards homosexuality, together with a more liberal view on marriage, childbirth and social obligations endangers the fabric of society, as Chu T'ien-wen said: "If the people consider only sexual stimulation and not reproduction, then society will be destroyed."<sup>82</sup>

Chu's writing about the threat to mankind, as critic Chan Hung-chih points out, makes the novel sounds like a "moral" tale.<sup>83</sup> Chang Ch'i-chiang also

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<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>80</sup> See Dan Sperber, "Claude Lévi-Strauss," in *Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida*, ed. John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University, 1979), p. 23.

<sup>81</sup> *HJSC*, p. 160.

<sup>82</sup> Chu T'ien-wen and Su Wei-cheng, "Ch'ing-yü hsieh-tso: shen-ti hsiang yi-chien yu-hsiu te ch'i-ch'i (Writing Eroticism: The Body Is Like an Exquisite Lacquerware), Nov. 10, 1994, p. 39.

<sup>83</sup> See under "Chan Hung-chih," in "Tsai ku-tu te yüeh-yeh li ke-ch'ang: Shih-pao pai-wan hsiao-shuo chiang *Huang-jen shou-chi*, *Ch'en-mo chih-tao* hsin-shu fa-piao hui

criticises the pro-reproduction views that Chu's narrator proposes, and questions whether that point of view "betrays the position of homosexuals."<sup>84</sup>

However, because Chu's intention was to shock society and to express her own feelings, as well as to convey the homosexual view, it is not surprising that these critics question the appropriateness of using homosexuality as a means -- "a ventriloquist's dummy" in the delivery of the author's message concerning the importance of the family.

In modern Chinese literature, writing about homosexuality has been mainly from the masculine viewpoint. Generally, the treatment has been sympathetic in depicting the homosexual as a victim of society or showing how they have constructed their own society-within-a-society. Pai Hsien-yung's writing about homosexuality is most widely known, his *Sinful Son* (*Nieh-tzu*), originally published in the early 1980s, is a remarkable depiction of a man's relationship with a series of boys.<sup>85</sup> However, what is seldom discussed in this and other

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tsuo-t'an chi-yao" (A Lonely Song in the Evening Moonlight: The Launch of *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* and *Silent Island*, the China Times Million NT. Dollar Award for Fiction), *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), Nov. 19, 1994, p. 34.

<sup>84</sup>. Quoted in Liu Liang-ya, "Pai-tang tsai hsien-tai yü hou-hsien-tai chih-chien", 1995, p. 15.

<sup>85</sup>. Pai Hsien-yung, *Nieh-tzu* (*Sinful Son*) (Taipei: Yün-ch'en chu-pan-she, 1997). English translation by Howard Goldblatt, *Crystal Boys* (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1990). The story involves many homosexuals' experiences, but the major story line threading through the whole novel is about an old retired general who cannot tolerate his son, who turns out to be a homosexual. Tormented by his own guilt, the son commits suicide while he is doing military service. After the incident, because of his guilt, the general starts to support a group of young homeless homosexuals, who had been forced to leave home, either because of their sexual identity, or simply because they were from broken families.

male homosexual writings is the nature of the difference between masculinity and femininity, gender and power in society.<sup>86</sup>

While asserting that Pai's portrayal of homosexuality is as a clinical abnormality, C. T. Hsia suggests that Pai's homosexual writing is more like that of Thomas Mann in that it is concerned with the inner life of an individual, rather than like that of Gide or Genet who are both concerned with behavioural and social issues, and condemn society in general for its negative attitudes.<sup>87</sup> In discussing Pai Hsien-yung's works, C. T. Hsia describes how Pai contrasts the beauty of the male with the ugliness of the female, and the disgusting reality of child birth, thus revealing, what I consider to be, Pai's basic hostility to women.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike Pai, Chu is neutral on the subject, being concerned with the inner life of both her male protagonist and her female characters. *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* has a broad discussion of sexual differences, masculinity and femininity, and the flexible relationship of yin/yang.

Although Chu's topic is male homosexuality, at no point in the story does she diminish the female nature, on the contrary, the novel shows the male

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<sup>86</sup>. For instance, Pai's novel *Nieh-tzu* was adapted as a film by the director Yü K'an-ping, in which Yü gives a very sympathetic view of the world of homosexuals, without exploring sexual desire or power relationships among the groups, as though the film was just another melodrama.

Wen T'ien-hsiang suggests that the characterisation of the elderly general is such as to subvert patriarchal society. Wen's interpretation of the story can be said to be an example of a new power-oriented, gender-based literary criticism. See his article in "Mo-ching ts'an-ying: ha-yü tien-ying chung te t'ung-hsing-lien" (Fragmented Image in a Magic Mirror: Homosexuals in the World of the Chinese Films) in *Chen-p'in yüeh-tu* (Eslite Book Review), 17 (August 1994), p. 51.

<sup>87</sup>. *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>88</sup>. See C. T. Hsia, "Pai Hsien-yung tsao-ch'i te tuan-p'ien hsiao-shuo" (The Early Short Stories of Pai Hsien-yung), chap. in *Wen-hsüeh te ch'ien-tu* (The Future of Literature) (Taipei: Ch'un-wen-hsüeh chu-pan-she, 1980), p. 168.

narrator affirming the integrity of femininity. Chu presents a series of male characters, uncertain of their identity and living in a "desolate man's world," who lack a socially conformist, conventional middle-class masculinity. For instance, we see the repugnant old man (Kao-shou-tzu) behaving submissively towards his unworthy pick ups, cooking food and washing their bodies. The narrator too is made to sound like a wife to Yung-chieh in the description of the imaginary wedding. On the other hand, the narrator's best woman friend, Pei-pei is shown as an outspoken woman who prefers to wear masculine clothes.

From a conventional perspective, these characters of her violate the traditional roles of women and men, and are a sign of the decaying of the conventional social structure. The sense of destruction is at its most intense when the narrator leaves for India to seek his enlightenment and comes to realise that the traditional moral orders of East and West are bound to decay.

### **5.10 Enlightenment: Linking East and West**

As a homosexual who feels that he has no roots in the society in which he lives, the narrator fantasises that, through travel he can form spiritual and emotional links with the whole world. An aesthetic journey that would not only cover the treasures of the East and the West, the ancient and the modern but also the religions and myths of the world.

While the narrator and his partner are travelling in Italy, they visit their Italian friend, Mo-mo. Mo-mo's home is decorated entirely in Chinese style, which evokes the narrator's youthful, idealised dream of China. However, the narrator now feels that he would be rejected by his mother country and says of Communist China: "In my map of the world, I skip over only that big piece of

land."<sup>89</sup> The narrator's travels take him to Italy, Japan, Egypt and India where he can soliloquise on the myths of the old worlds of East and West. A-yao, on the other hand, is shown travelling to cities which are symbols of freedom and independent thought, such as New York and San-Francisco. Such a contrast establishes the licentious life of the homosexual activist with many sexual partners, as compared with the narrator's aesthetic life style.

Because homosexuality is socially unacceptable in modern Taiwan, the gay man's social space is limited and confined to members of his own circle. For the narrator, travelling abroad with his partner is an escape from the society in which he lives, it makes him feel less restricted, and gives him access to a more beautiful, elegant and refined world.

However, there is no romantic feeling about the narrator's trip to India. While travelling in India the narrator observes: "In India, I cannot sense the presence of city, but only get the feeling of collections of houses in the ground, or that these houses are just a world of dust. On the dust a carpet is laid, the people sitting there, with their foreheads painted with fragrant powder, a scarlet spot between the eyebrows, all the civilisations in the world are here." The narrator goes on, saying: "Therefore in India, there are even no ancient artefacts, or monuments, no man-made architecture, or material cosmos. Everywhere in every place all that can be seen are only human beings."<sup>90</sup> In saying this the narrator is reflecting his own feelings about the world. Feeling alienated from the people he knows, even in his mental isolation he nonetheless has some common feeling with the masses.

During this trip to India, Hsiao-Shao, seeking for understanding of the meaning of his existence and of A-yao's death, reflects on various aspects of

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<sup>89</sup>. *HJSC*, p. 199.

<sup>90</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 213.

Buddha's life -- his harsh journey in the pursuit of enlightenment, his sacrifice for people, his significance as a member of his family, and the Buddhist doctrine of the cycle of life. The desire to balance scientific truth and literary truth is also exemplified by the narrator in his attempt to combine Western scientific studies, represented by Lévi-Strauss, with a Buddhist system of philosophy and morality.

Hsiao-Shao imitates the Buddha's renunciation of the material life and his search for enlightenment. The Buddha, unlike other prophets, finds that starvation does not lead to enlightenment. Therefore he develops his rule of the middle way, moderation in everything. Hsiao-Shao re-creates the experience of the Buddha, pointing out that Buddha was saved by a shepherd, which makes him realise that the people rely on food and love.<sup>91</sup> Through the exposition of the Buddha's story, the desert-like landscape of India then transforms into a civilised society, where human relationships are valued and cherished.

Unlike a trip to Europe, where Hsiao-Shao finds the sights more dramatic than those of his hometown, the description of the historical site of Buddha's meditation is compared with a peaceful country scene in his native Taiwan: "The old bodhi tree stretches its stems out to create a large shady area, underneath is the Precious Diamond Seat (chin-kang pao-tsuo). It looks like the temples in the villages of Taiwan."<sup>92</sup> His recognition of the resemblance of the Indian landscape to that of his home village suggests his desire to live in a peaceful, family-oriented atmosphere.

The Buddha showed a passion for the common people. His leaving his family to seek enlightenment was inspired by a holy mission to redeem the world. As the narrator says: "So I (can) see him, in that dark night, Sakyamuni gets up from beside his sleeping wife. He gazes upon the face of his wife, this face is

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<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.



actually the face of the common people, whom he had been concerned about for a long time."<sup>93</sup> The implication is that Hsiao-Shao, like Buddha cannot have ordinary family relationships. In this way the narrator uses the Buddha to justify his own decadent behaviour. Furthermore, the narrator considers that the history of the human world is a "history of destruction," exemplified by the pattern of life and death. The Buddha, born as a prince, gives up his right to the throne. His renunciation of his family is interpreted by the narrator as a symbol of natural development in which the foundation of order is bound to decay. He borrows Lévi-Strauss's statement that "anthropology can change into the study of entropy," by which he means "the systematic study of understanding the process of deterioration from the apex of the structure."<sup>94</sup>

In his monologue the narrator feels desolated because of this sense of ruin, yet is still looking for a chance for redemption. In Buddhism, the cycle of life is made up of the phases of birth, life, decaying, death and rebirth. It is the rebirth phase which gives the narrator a particular sense of encouragement. As a homosexual, the narrator is constantly haunted by the fact that AIDS is killing his friends one by one. He compares the pain of the AIDS patient with the Buddha's suffering, and seemingly hopes that an AIDS patient could regain his health as the Buddha recovered from starvation.<sup>95</sup> For the narrator, India is a world of Gods and Devils, especially when he visits the Ganges riverside, seeing the daily rituals of purification and burning of the dead, intensified his fear of death: "so many dead ghosts and so many living beings, with real faces and bodies, such a field of life and death."<sup>96</sup> The river scene of the India trip is linked

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<sup>93</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>94</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>95</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 212.

<sup>96</sup>. *Ibid.*, P. 215.

with A-yao's funeral in Japan, at which we are told that A-yao, in his mother's presence, finally converts to Christianity before he dies. We are not told if he was truly seeking peace for his soul, or, as the narrator believes, merely trying to relieve his mother's concern.

Nevertheless, the narrator regards A-yao's suffering from AIDS as undignified because it disfigures A-yao's body. He believes that A-yao may have changed his ideas as he approached his death: "In his last few years A-yao appeared uncertain about his own ideas."<sup>97</sup> He thought that perhaps A-yao would not have been so extreme in promoting his sexual identity, if he had known that he would die of AIDS.

No matter for what reason, by showing his concern for his mother before he dies, A-yao acts like his mother's son rather than a homosexual activist. In the eyes of the narrator, A-yao's unsettled life finally finds peace with his death, symbolised by the restrained elegance of A-yao's mother's reaction: "Every time mother cries, she always uses her neatly folded handkerchief to press on her right eye, and then her left eye, no more than three-times, then she would stop crying."<sup>98</sup> Looking at the ashes of A-yao's thorax after the cremation, Hsiao-Shao imagines that it resembles A-Yao sitting in Buddha-like meditation. This use of the icon of universal compassion not only implies that A-yao is capable of being redeemed, but also symbolises the moral support the narrator feels that he needs against the desolation of being separated from society.

In fighting the threat of AIDS, and facing uncertain future with his partner, the narrator has a feeling of being stranded in silent isolation. It is this feeling which leads him to itemise specific details of his encounters with his lovers--names of the places, day or night, season of the year. Number is used to show

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<sup>97</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>98</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

the precision of the narrator's aesthetic appreciation, for instance, to emphasise the narrator's refined appreciation of Yung-chieh's looks: "Yung-chieh turns towards me showing *a quarter* profile, this angle is the most beautiful."<sup>99</sup> Moreover, number is also used to stress the scope or extent of a panorama or history. For instance: "Three thousands boundless universes, the reign of thousands of kings, a landscape of thousands of fragrances."<sup>100</sup> This hyperbolic, adjectival use of number has the effect of highlighting the narrator's artistic emotion. Chu's display of refined language, in the novelist Kuo Cheng's opinion, is unusual, as he says, he "has never seen an author who uses such a diverse vocabulary and idioms in such a precise way."<sup>101</sup>

In this novel, Chu's topographical images of sand, caves, and empty cities, together with Japanese ornamental white cherry trees and the moon are prevalent. For colour she skilfully applies Chinese bright red and green, Mediterranean blue, orange and pearl, using "cold" colours to evoke a dramatic visual effect. She had already used a similar delicate portrayal of sensations of feeling in *Splendour of the End of the Century*. However, in *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, the use of language not only dazzles the reader, but also helps to communicate her serious philosophical message.

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<sup>99</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 70. Italic is my emphasis.

<sup>100</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>101</sup>. Kuo Cheng, "Chin-ju Chu T'ien-wen te hsiao-shuo shih-chieh: ts'ui-ts'an chih pien-chieh (Entering the World of Chu T'ien-wen: The Border of Brilliance), *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), Nov. 21, 1994. p. 39.

### 5.11 A Noble Modern Man?

While Yung-chieh is away working abroad, the narrator tries to relieve his loneliness by keeping up his normal routine of academic work, but he is easily distracted. One night, unable to settle, he decides to "spring clean" the house. He feels that their bedroom is suffused with loneliness, and finds solace in the story of the lonely pop singer, Michael Jackson alone in his impressive empty mansion with the carousel. The narrator says to himself: "Loneliness occupies the whole mind and body. It makes people unable to read or write, unable to listen to music, or watch a video. I can almost hear it, like ants chewing on my heart; eating the substance of my brain and bone; stealing into my skeleton and hiding away inside."<sup>102</sup> He feels that his physical body is being tortured by the sense of solitude: "I feel my heart aching as though a breaking wave had suddenly collapsed onto my chest. It is difficult to breathe. I feel an unbearably piercing pain, extreme fatigue."<sup>103</sup> It gets to the point when he can read nothing but an academic study on colour names used in Classical Chinese poetry.

According to this study, there are one hundred and forty shades of red described in Chinese poetry. The list frequently uses compound expressions, qualifying the name of a colour with nouns evoking classical Chinese paintings of flowers, fruits and birds, grasses and insects, for instance, "melon pulp red" (kua-jang hung), "long horned grass-hopper green" (fang-chih-niang lü);<sup>104</sup> or evoking theatrical emotions "lonely palace flower red" (kung-hua chi-mo hung) and "decaying green" (t'ui-lü).<sup>105</sup> The extensive collection of descriptive phrases

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<sup>102</sup> *HJSC*, p. 87.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

occupies almost two full pages. It appears as a spontaneous effusion, lacking a specific purpose. The result, however, is enormously effective, as the narrator finds the rhythm of the names enjoyable, like listening to music.

In Buddhism, among the meanings of the word *se* are colour, sensuality, and lust. Its use in this episode carries implications for the psychological state of the narrator, showing the shift of his attention away from scholarly, intellectual pursuits.

The intense visual pleasure afforded by his reactions to the sutra-like descriptions of kaleidoscopic colours relieves and sublimates his loneliness:

Escape from the logical structure of language, abandon even the meaning of the characters, and the characters become like the fragments in a kaleidoscope, making a splendid sight for the eye. As though I let myself enter into the scene and forget to come out; a garden of pure sensual stimulation.<sup>106</sup>

In this "garden of pure sensual stimulation," the narrator finds enchantment, "I move quickly, I omit, I search, I drown once again. Oh! the pleasure of text. Yes, I came, I saw, I conquered."<sup>107</sup>

Most of Chu's lavish descriptions of colours<sup>108</sup> were from *Pei-wen yün-fu*, which Chu appears to have consulted extensively.<sup>109</sup> Her creative use of a multi-layered classical and modern vocabulary serves to increase the impact of her

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106. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

107. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

108. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

109. *Pei-wen yün-fu* (Elegant Literature Rhyming Poetic Forms; a rhyming dictionary compiled in A. D. 1711 during the reign of the Emperor Kang Hsi), ed. Chang Yü-shu and others (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1937), pp. 35-36; pp. 3521-3523.

language by repetition of meaning through the use of different ideographs. On the other hand, the reading of a list of colours is used as the starting point for a philosophical discussion.

While indulging in visual pleasure, Hsiao-Shao finds justification of his indulgence in colours by discussing Johann Wolfgang Goethe's study of colour, and cites Goethe and Monet in distinguishing between objective and subjective knowledge. Following Goethe, the narrator asks: "Do the colours of nature exist outside ourselves, or only through our eyes in our brain?"<sup>110</sup> He asks whether Monet, blind in his later years and not able to see colours, was painting the colours in his mind or the colours in the tubes of paint.

He goes back to his homosexual identity "I am or I am not, I have lost the way in the question I asked myself and cannot answer. Like now, I am still lost anyway, why should I ask."<sup>111</sup> As we can see, when the narrator asks himself such a question, he cannot answer and concludes: "I would like to follow the example of the devout Buddhist, men and women who repeated *Diamond Sutra* without understanding its meaning, just chanting the rhythm continuously."<sup>112</sup>

Until he meets Chieh the dancer, the narrator does not want to admit that he is a homosexual. He then accepts his own nature and regards himself like A-yao as "one of the ten percent of the world's population who are homosexual."<sup>113</sup> Through the novel, we can see that Chu's main character regards himself not as a sage but as an "ordinary man," a decadent in his small private world, self-indulgent in his personal relationships. Although he reads the works of the great scholars, he does not himself aspire to scholarship. In the novel, Chu replaces

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<sup>110</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>111</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>112</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>113</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

her early Three-Three characterisation of the enthusiastic and collaborative intellectual with a homosexual who is uneasy with himself, and passive and wary of revealing himself in intense discussion with others: "I am just too afraid of sloganising with other people."<sup>114</sup>

The difference between Hsiao-Shao and A-yao, is epitomised by the terms "gay" and "queer." It is the difference between the "modern" attitude of Hsiao-Shao who wants to find a place for himself as a homosexual in a society the structure and mores of which he basically accepts; and the "post-modern" attitude of A-yao, who rejects what has gone before and wishes to build a new society in which he will have a place as of right. Thus, Hsiao-Shao is "noble" in the sense that he cherishes the idea of stability of structure in a fractured, decayed world, whereas A-yao is presented as a revolutionary social heretic in his post-modern total rejection of convention.

While she was writing *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, Chu T'ien-wen declared that in writing it she did not feel the same sense of working for a social cause that she once had, what she most wanted now was to fulfil herself as a writer: "The value of discovering myself, rewarding myself is more important than anything else, it makes me feel that I am not useless."<sup>115</sup> She claimed that her novel *The Notebook of the Desolate Man* was written not to be read by the public, but by friends whose taste she respected. I would contend that such an urge to confirm her existential value actually conceals an anxiety that such an innovative work might not win public acceptance and the recognition that, in reality, she craved -- otherwise, why publish?

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>115</sup> See under "Chu T'ien-wen," in "Tsai ku-tu te yüeh-yeh li ke-ch'ang", *Chung-kuo shih-pao* (China Times), Nov. 19, 1994, p. 34.

Chu's adherence to the classical concept of the *shih* of her Three-Three period began to be loosened by the rapid increase in democratic political activity, unprecedented in a Chinese society, of the Nativists and the DPP during her post-college years. Her film work first demonstrated its effects, as described in Chapter III, which then carried through to her writing, where, although the original conservative, classic habits of thought still show through, her concentration on sensuality and sexuality took her public by surprise. However, the impact was softened to some extent by the classical foundation of her phraseology and language generally.

Given Chu's own comments on the writing of the novel, and the choice of profession for the narrator, i.e. university teacher, it is justifiable to claim that here is one disillusioned *shih* writing about another. Chu T'ien-wen had seen the ideals of her youth under attack, and she had begun to question the whole system of values of her intellectual community, as her narrator, Hsiao-Shao puts it: "We are so eager to hand down our knowledge, but we are regarded as out of date."<sup>116</sup> In this novel, Chu shows originality in the use of language as a purely visual aesthetic stimulus, as well as in piling up elaborate descriptions to evoke an emotional response. In her use of social science and mythology, she succeeds in illuminating, in a literary and human sense, the topic she discusses.

At the end of the novel, what we can conclude about the development of Chu's thinking during her progress from the traditionally minded, Three-Three teenage intellectual to the best-selling author of her maturity, is that the extent to which she has cast aside her traditional Chinese intellectual approach is limited. However, her exposure to different points of view in the course of her work has led her to be able to present a rational and sympathetic argument for the acceptance of the homosexual in society.

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<sup>116</sup> *HJSC*, pp. 59-60.



Nevertheless, if we regard the novel purely as an apologia for male homosexuality, then we shall be in danger of forgetting Chu's original intention in writing it. Her original aim had been to pay homage to Hu Lan-ch'eng by writing a book on Chinese women, a project which Hu himself had failed to complete. Her first attempt failed, but in the second, the novel, which was not, in fact, about women, but the plight of the homosexual, she was able to utilise much of the material she already had for her study on women and femininity.

I suggest that the novel should be regarded as an allegory in which the status of the male homosexual in a heterosexual society is regarded as having much in common with that of women in Confucian society, ie. accepted in society only on the terms laid down by society itself. Thus, although ostensibly writing about male homosexuality, Chu was in fact writing about both men and women, about issues of gender in general in present day Taiwan -- giving the novel a much greater resonance and relevance.

## Conclusion

### A Shih's Decadent Fiction

Over the seventeen years from *The Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao* to the *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, the main literary direction of Chu T'ien-wen's writing has changed greatly from teenage romances to stories of adult urban life. However, there has been a constant concern in all her work with questions of morality and ethics. Counterbalancing this concern in her latest stories, her character's unremitting drive to obtain sensual satisfaction produces a strong moral tension in her work. It is this tension, resulting from the dynamic opposition of sensuality and morality which is the feature of Chu's latest writing, and which, in spite of her modern setting, places her work closer to that of some classical Chinese decadent writers than to that of the European writers of the end of the nineteenth century, and their Chinese imitators of the 1930s.

The examination of the differences between Chu's own psychological motivation and that of these two groups of writers will show that, as compared with the Wei-Chin *shih* her reaction is opposed to the political aspirations of the people, and favours the prerogative of the ruler, and that as compared with the modern Chinese writers of the 30s and 40s, her writing is the expression of a genuine inner turmoil and not just the technical exercises of a fashion-chasing, attitude-striking group of dilettantes.

In the concluding section of the chapter, I shall demonstrate how Chu reacted against the progress being made towards a democratic political system in Taiwan. The anxiety permeating her writing for a reconciliation of current mores with traditional values contrasts with the reactions of the European writers of the

nineteenth century, whose object was to overthrow the strict morality of the times.

### **I. Wei-Chin Period: "Decadence" Among the *Shih***

The "Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove" (Chu-lin ch'i-hsien) noted for their self indulgent and unrestrained life style, are probably the most discussed group of decadents in Chinese literature. The reason for their notoriety is not just their intransigent behaviour, but the fact that they were *shih* who were, of course, supposed to set the example of upright conduct to the broad mass of society. But this was a time of continuous power struggle and corruption at the court.

In traditional Chinese authoritarian society, the *shih* had to vie with each other for the ear of the emperor. They were sensitive to the stresses and strains of the power structure of the court because the use of their ideas and abilities depended directly on their relationship with the ruler. If the power network of the court changed, the *shih* might well see their influence disappear, or alternatively they could be unwilling to participate in the new power structure. Since they would disdain any identification with the common people, withdrawal from the court and a life of indulgence was a recognised way of demonstrating frustration. It served to maintain the purity of their personal moral standards, and to sustain their *shih* identity.

Their exclusion from influence at court led some *shih* to decide to retire from the service of the ruler so that they could freely express their feelings, and lead a life of indulgence in drinking and "pure conversation" (ch'ing-t'an). For *shih*, withdrawal from service is an acceptable way of expressing disapproval of

the ruler's actions without inviting execution. Thus, their lifestyle did not denote a rejection of Confucian morality itself, but was rather a coded criticism of the ruler's supposed corruption and rejection of their advice.

Of course, behaviour which was considered outrageous at that time, would seem to us today to be a relatively mild social transgression. We can cite some examples from two of the "Seven Worthies" of the type of behaviour which would have been considered decadent at that time. Juan Chi (A.D. 210-263) violated the filial rules of the Confucian code by accepting an invitation to a party and helping himself generously to meat and drink during the prescribed period of mourning for his mother. He was seen drunk and dishevelled with no sign of grief by an important visitor who came to pay his condolences.<sup>1</sup> Another of the Seven, Liu Ling ( - A.D. 265) regarded the universe itself as too confining, so he would frequently strip off all his clothes and sit naked in his room. He would enquire of his visitors, using eccentric if charming logic: "I consider heaven and earth to be my pillars and roof, and the rooms of my house to be my underpants and jacket. What are you gentlemen doing in my underpants?"<sup>2</sup> Such social solecisms are significant for their symbolic meaning rather than for the actual seriousness of the offence.

These "Seven Worthies" preferred to write about aristocrats and the virtues of the aristocracy. They tended to surround themselves with a circle of

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<sup>1</sup>. Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 73-87. See also Yang Yung, ed., *Shih-shuo hsün-yü chiao-chien* (Notes and Commentaries on *A New Account of Tales of the World*) (Hong Kong: Ta-chung shu-chü, 1969), chap. 23, no. 11, p. 553, and Liu I-ch'ing, ed., *Shih-shuo hsün-yü* (*A New Account of Tales of the World*). Reprint of the text made up from early editions by Lo Chen-yü. Commentary by Liu, Hsiao-piao (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962).

<sup>2</sup>. Yang Yung, ed., *Shih-shuo hsün-yü chiao-chien*, chap. 23, no. 6, p. 551.

friends with something of the grand manner about them, figures for whom life was a pure and noble matter to be regulated according to the rules of honour. We may agree with Eric O. Johannesson's comments on the fiction of Isak Dinesen suggesting that the author regards the basic virtues of the aristocrat as: "a profound sense of honour, a great pride expressing itself in a passion for the grand gesture and the great repartee that will make one immortal."<sup>3</sup> This seems also to apply to Juan Chi's case. Apart from his writing about himself as a desolate man withdrawn from his rightful place in society, the gallery of characters of Juan Chi's poetry is composed of heroes and warriors who are not afraid to fight for the nation.

The fact that these "Seven Worthies" were writing about the nobility can be seen as reflecting their acute sense of moral obligation. These *shih*, then, were not able simply to discard Confucian observances and indulge themselves in food and drink, sex and leisure. Chi K'ang's (A.D. 223-262) well-known work "On Regimen" (Yang-sheng lun) formulating rules of healthy living, demonstrates his belief in the pursuit of pleasure, but, behind his seemingly self-indulgent life, he thinks hard about the choice between Taoism/Buddhism and Confucianism, and earnestly debates the question with friends. In his essay "Wonder" (Pu-yi), Chi K'ang sets out the characteristics necessary for a *shih* to be successful -- a reclusive *shih* must be spiritual, a chivalrous *shih* should have a strong sense of honour, and if a *shih* wishes to achieve great things, he must cultivate his courage. As Luo Tsung-ch'iang points out: "the essay reads less

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<sup>3</sup>. See Eric O. Johannesson, *The World of Isak Dinesen* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1961), pp. 91-92.

like a typology than a discussion of the moral principles appropriate to each type of *shih*."<sup>4</sup>

The withdrawn *shih* of the Wei-Chin period can be seen as a group of *shih* who were forced to accept the reality underlying the ostensible power structure, and realised that their actual moral authority over the ruler and the people was minimal. They sought to escape from the contradictions of the situation by behaviour not readily reconcilable with their Confucian principles. They used devices in their writing such as emotional complaining, or the cultivation of rhetoric and aesthetics in accordance with the practice of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu.<sup>5</sup>

While Juan Chi disavows interest in affairs of state, nonetheless, his writing shows unmistakable concern about the ruler and the governance of the state. In his "Eleventh Poem," he expresses disdain for an earlier emperor and his officials for the neglect of their duties. But the historical situation he is referring to actually mirrors the situation in his own state at the time that he is writing, and is an indirect criticism of the then emperor of the Chin dynasty.<sup>6</sup>

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4. Luo Tsung-ch'iang, *Hsüan-hsüeh yü wei-chin shih-jen hsin-t'ai* (Mysticism and The Attitude of Wei-Chin shih) (Che-chiang: Jen-min c'hu-pan-she, 1991), p. 100.

5. Yü Ying-shih, "Individualism and the Neo-Taoist Movement in Wei-Chin China," in *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values*, ed. Donald J. Munro (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1985), pp. 141-142. Yü points out that "Even Pure Conversation. . . became highly ritualised in the course of its development. To qualify as a Pure Conversationalist, for instance, one had to be trained in the art of speech, including voice and logic, to know how to gesticulate the fly whisk properly, to be well versed in the three metaphysical works -- the Book of Changes, the Lao Tzu, and the Chuang Tzu, and above all, to belong to the elite circle."

6. See Po Han's analysis in *Han Wei Liu-ch'ao shih-ke chien-shang tzu-tien* (The Dictionary of Han, Wei and Six Dynasty), eds. Lü Ch'ing-fei and others (Peking: Hsin-hua shu-tien, 1990), p. 314.

During the time that these Wei-Chin writers sought dissolute pleasure in exile, they seem to be watching society deteriorating while themselves remaining inactive. In Juan Chi's "Ninetieth Poem," he uses the object of his sexual desires, an unattainable beautiful woman as a metaphor for the intensity of his desire for an unrealisable perfection.<sup>7</sup> Juan Chi, because of his father's post and friendship with the royal family, was under a moral obligation to the Wei dynasty. The usurpation by the Chin was, to his mind, a sordid affair, full of cheating, hypocrisy and violence. On the accession of the new dynasty, he could resist actively, or resist passively, that is to say, to serve without serving -- which was the path he chose.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of this, these aggrieved *shih*, inebriated in their pleasure, were obliged to act submissively, not to criticise the ruler directly, but to make indirect allusion through their poetry to the situation of the government and the state. Thus, as critics Yen T'ao and Lin Sheng point out, these *shih* "survive in the cracks between Confucianism and anti-Confucianism"<sup>9</sup> The spirited literature of the Wei-Chin's "Seven Worthies," energised by the prospect of challenging the government has great freshness and vividness. These works remain possibly the best examples of the precious aesthetic legacy of, what I would call, *shih* decadence to Chinese literature.

Another case like that of the Wei-Chin *shih* arose in the Ming dynasty. The common element being that *shih* having been expelled from positions in the power structure, chose to reject their official responsibility.

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<sup>7</sup>. *Ibid.*, p. 318.

<sup>8</sup>. Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi A.D. 210-263*, 1976, p. 243.

<sup>9</sup>. Yen T'ao and Lin Sheng, *Chung-kuo ku-tai te shih* (Shih in Ancient China) (Honon: Jen-min c'hu-pan-she), p. 136.

As usual, the condition for *shih's* turning towards a profligate life occurred when the *shih's* ideology was opposed to the mainstream ideology of the state. In this case, some *shih* considered that the government had become over-obsessed with achieving strict observance of moral rules by the common people. For instance, women who were widowed at a young age were encouraged by a system of public awards to promote chastity not to remarry. Those who did not conform suffered criticism from their fellow villagers. This is just one example of the methods used by the Ming government to place a moral responsibility on the common people. The excessive pressures for morality coming from the government led some members of the literati to express their feeling about the hypocrisy of the government by the cultivation of a taste for erotic literature.<sup>10</sup> In the strictly moralist atmosphere of the time, the publication of works of eroticism was calculated to make a strong impact. The enthusiastic reception that works of eroticism could receive can be measured by the success of the sixteenth century novel, *The Golden Lotus* (Chin-p'ing mei), a story of sexual debauchery, which satirises an oppressive official morality.<sup>11</sup>

There is an interesting, though indirect parallel in these two examples with Chu T'ien-wen in that many of her readers would consider her latest work to be highly shocking. In this respect, Chu could be considered to be showing a similar response to a moral dilemma as did the classical *shih*.

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<sup>10</sup>. See Henry Yi-heng Zhao, "Ni-fan you-hsi: se-ch'ing, wen-hua fen-ts'eng, li-chiao hsia-yen" (The Game of Reaction: Eroticism, Stratification of Culture and the Downward Extension of Rites) in *K'ui-che chih pien: hsing-shih wen-hua-hsüeh lun-chi* (A Defence of Voyeurism: Essays on Formalism and Culture Studies) (Ch'ang-ch'un: Shih-tai wen-yi ch'u pan-she), p. 64.

<sup>11</sup>. Similarly, the seventeenth century novel, *The Carnal Prayer Mat* (Jou-p'u-t'uan), describing the experiences of a scholar who abandons his studies for a life of eroticism, can be seen as another example from the Ch'ing Dynasty. Li Yü, *Jou p'u t'uan* (The Carnal Prayer Mat), trans. Patrick Hanan (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990).



## II. Aestheticism in Modern Chinese Literature: A Search for New Inspiration

In the restricted world of Chinese literature of the 1920s and 30s, the widening interest in Western literature led to the introduction of a decadent aesthetic which had first appeared in the expanding industrial countries of Europe. Even though China was not industrialised and the Chinese middle-class was still embryonic, some modern Chinese writers were very attracted to these French and English aesthetic movements. In the early 1920s there was an explosion of activity in the literary world of Shanghai. Many journals, such as *Creation* (Ch'uang-tsao) and *Sprouts* (Ch'ien-ts'ao), were launched to promote the idea of "art for art's sake", the idea of an art which does not attempt to propagate a set of moral values, but exists in and for itself. The title of the journal, *Muse* (Mi-sa) was borrowed from the English for the Goddess who inspired poets. As one of the contributors to the journal asserted: "We embody the Goddess of literature, all we do is solely to follow our inspiration."<sup>12</sup>

The eagerness to adopt Western aestheticism is exemplified by the writers of the "Crescent Moon School" (Hsin-yüeh p'ai) and "Sphinx Society" (Shih-hou she).<sup>13</sup> *The Crescent Moon Journal* was inspired by the English decadent journal, the *Yellow Book*, which contained mainly poetry, fiction and essays

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<sup>12</sup>. Quoted in Liu Ch'in-wei, ed. *Chung-kuo hsien-tai wei-mei chu-yi wen-hsüeh tso-p'in hsüan* (Selected Works of Modern Chinese Literature of Aestheticism) vol. 1-2. (K'uang-chou: Hua-ch'eng ch'u-pan-she, 1996), p. 10.

<sup>13</sup>. The Chinese name "Shih-hou she" was chosen by the members of the society with the English translation in mind. See Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Chung-kuo hsien-tai wen-hsüeh te t'ui-fei chi tso-chia" (Decadence in Chinese Modern Literature and Writers), *Tang-tai*, no. 93 (Jan. 1994): 36.

decorated with sexually evocative illustrations.<sup>14</sup> The poet Hsü Chih-mo declared that he and his friends wanted to follow the example set by the English artists and poets, the Rossetti brothers, hoping to "create a new path for arts and literature."<sup>15</sup>

The aim of these groups of writers was to use the concept of a purely creative aesthetic not only to inspire new writing, but also to improve creative techniques. Perhaps the main benefit derived from Western aesthetics at this time was that artists started to think theoretically about art as a form of personal expression, rather than as a statement of a general philosophical or aesthetic position.

However, there were some writers who not only sought literary inspiration from Western aestheticism, but also actually took the life style of the Western aesthetes as their model. Shao Hsün-mei, a member of the "Sphinx Society," took Oscar Wilde as his model and led a self-indulgent life, by having an American mistress and a series of cars to match the various colours of his clothes.<sup>16</sup> Although Shao aspired to be a late nineteenth century "dandy" in the Oscar Wilde mode, he succeeded mainly in the superficial aspect, and seems to have been more like a "playboy," seeking only sensual pleasure.

Similarly, works by Shih Che-ts'un, Mu Shih-ying and Liu Na-ou of the "New Sensualist School" demonstrated interest in the exploration of sexuality in an urban culture. As Leo Ou-fan Lee points out, works by Mu and Liu use "the temptations of urban culture to show the power of sexuality to fascinate middle

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. Some modern writers, for instance, Yü Ta-fu and T'ien Han, were educated in Japan, and felt the influence of French and English aesthetic literature indirectly through the Japanese aesthetic literature.

<sup>16</sup> See Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Chung-kuo hsien-tai wen-hsüeh te t'ui-fei chi tso-chia" (Decadence in Chinese Modern Literature and Writers), *Tang-tai*, no. 93 (Jan. 1994): 39.

class men, using the femme-fatale imagery of Gustav Klimt's painting."<sup>17</sup> He continues, "They did not realise that European decadent literature was part of a rebellion by European artists against the bourgeois modernisation of society."<sup>18</sup>

Lee's argument is that the Chinese writers of the "New Sensualist School," because they were so eager to enjoy all the benefits of modern life, could not distance themselves sufficiently to grasp the wider cultural implications of urban modernisation. Naturally, given the condition of China in the 1930s, people longed for the material benefits of modernisation, and were intensely curious about the modern Western way of life and fashionable commercial products. I agree with Lee that they were in no position to understand how the germs of decadence and alienation would infect the modern city as it developed.

Lee suggests that Chang Ai-ling's writing was decadent, and that she was the only writer who "takes up a truly modern stance yet uses the aspirations of classical poetry and drama in resisting the May Fourth new literature tradition."<sup>19</sup> However, Chang herself saw through the superficial sheen of the 1930s and 40s Chinese aestheticians, saying: "The beauty of Aestheticism has no real substance."<sup>20</sup> She never identified with the aestheticism of the 1930s, and was more concerned with depicting human relationships than with the production of fiction as "art for art's sake."

The major difference between Chang Ai-ling and Chu T'ien-wen is that whereas Chang wrote stories about the collapse of a firmly structured, powerful traditional society, she did not suffer personal affront to her ideas of morality on which she never had strong views. Chu, on the other hand, faced changes in the

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17. Leo Ou-fan Lee, "Chung-kuo hsien-tai wen-hsüeh te t'ui-fei chi tso-cha", p. 32.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

20. Chang Ai-ling, *Liu-yen*, p. 21.

society of the Taiwan of her time which presaged the collapse of her whole ethical system, the rejection by society of the values which informed her whole approach to life. Chang had never regarded herself as a *shih*, and felt responsibility neither for the preservation of tradition nor for the moral state of society. Chang Ai-ling's exposé of the society of her time was basically accepting not subversive. Before the Communist take over, Chang did not concern herself with contemporary political and moral thinking, because of this, her writing is sparkingly sensual but not actually decadent.

In general, Chinese aesthetic literature of the 1930s and 40s took its inspiration from fashion, enabling the depiction of indulgence in sensuality and sentimentality, but it was a superficial approach, a matter of writing style only. Not surprisingly, the fashion proved ephemeral as the social pressure of the war with Japan intensified. Some of the 1930s writers of aestheticism changed their position and joined the mainstream patriotic New Literature writers and took up the task of using literature to "save the nation."<sup>21</sup> By the end of the 1940s, even Chang Ai-ling herself whose writing had always been firmly based on actual life, had made a stylistic move in that direction.

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<sup>21</sup> Wu Jen considered that Lu Hsün reflected a strongly decadent mood in some of his works. However, both Lu Hsün and the other New literature writers, though expressing a depressed feeling about the state of the nation, did not take a negative view of the future, and cannot therefore be considered "decadents." See Wu Jen, ed., "Introduction," in *Chung-kuo hsien-tai t'ui-fei hsiao-shuo* (Modern Chinese Decadent Literature) (Hsi an: Hsi-pei ta-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1996), pp. 6-7.

### III. European Nineteenth Century *Fin-de-siècle*

In the Introduction, I raised the question whether the social conditions which gave rise to Chu's decadent novel had some parallel with those that gave rise to the European *fin-de-siècle* literary movement. While it is true that the time during which Chu was writing her *The Notebook of a Desolate Man* was a period of tremendous political and cultural activity in Taiwan, just as was the period of the *fin-de-siècle* in France and England, none the less, there are substantial points of difference. While Taiwan did receive a wave of immigrants in 1948, the people who came were not immigrants in the usual sense of the word. The influx of people into England from the middle of the nineteenth century was of a completely different character from those entering Taiwan. The immigrants to England had suffered political or racial persecution before arriving on England's shores mainly from Russia and middle European countries. These refugees made a tremendous contribution to the cultural life of the capital in particular, and England in general.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the industrialisation of Britain led not only to the growth of a prosperous middle-class which could afford to take a more benevolent view of life than the old rural landlords, but they could also express their concern for the social conditions of the working class by supporting the centre and left of the political spectrum. There was increasing

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<sup>22</sup>. According to Hennegan, at the end of the last century, British artists and writers experienced one of their rare periods of cosmopolitanism: the English capital itself was vibrant with new influences from a multitude of nations. London's population was swollen by foreign artists, socialists, communists, nationalists, anarchists and refugees. Waves of new immigrants came, each tended to settle together in a certain part of London. This produced much greater diversity in the city and changed the whole outlook of the city. See Alison Hennegan, "Personalities and Principles: Aspects of Literature and Life in England," in *Fin-de Siècle and Its Legacy*, ed. Mikulas Teich and Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 175.

concern about social conditions, which found expression not only in the growth of organised labour among the workers, but also in the increasing number of middle-class intellectuals attracted to social projects.<sup>23</sup> These social and political changes were accompanied by a rapid growth and diversity in cultural activity, in literature, art and the theatre.

The revitalisation of society was the subject of considerable contemporary discussion. Henry Havelock Ellis, for instance, expressed the excitement of the times in his book *The New Spirit* (1890). He considered that "Science, feminism and democracy were the trio of new forces that must inevitably transform the age," that "knowledge and education must be extended," and that "a new instinct for social organisation should be encouraged. . . Democracy was not State interference; it meant the community approaching the point where the individual himself becomes the State."<sup>24</sup>

But, of course, this rapid change also gave rise to what Elaine Showalter called "a period of cultural insecurity." This period of rapid cultural diversity also brought with it "fears of regression and degeneration, the longing for strict

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<sup>23</sup>. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken, ed., *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995), p. 7. From the political and economical aspect, the last two decades of nineteenth century in England was a period that saw the gradual decline of competitive capitalism and the emergence of its monopoly successor, and also saw a decline in the Liberal Party, and the growth of organised labour. For instance, the London Docker's Strike of 1889 led the unionisation of unskilled workers and the Labour Party was founded in 1900. From the 1880s onwards a growing number of middle-class intellectuals found themselves more attracted to socialist than to liberal ideas. These cultural and political changes became a stimulus for British writers and artists, including William Morris, George Bernard Shaw and W. B. Yeats.

<sup>24</sup>. H. Havelock Ellis, *The New Spirit* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), p. 17.

border controls around the definition of gender as well as race, class, and nationality, becomes especially intense."<sup>25</sup>

It was the vitality and intensity of life in such times of growing material security and questioning of moral values which led to the growth of a Decadent tendency in the arts and social life led by Oscar Wilde and others. Although homosexuality was still a social taboo as the "love that dares not speak its name," it was possible, though shocking, to refer to "bought love" in literature. As Alison Hennegan points out, for the self-proclaimedly world-weary and exhausted Decadents, "it was the sheer vitality and colourfulness of working-class public life which drew them obsessively: to the music hall (which Sickert painted and Berbohm and Symons extolled); to People' Theatres and pubs; and afterwards, sometimes, to the rooms of prostitutes."<sup>26</sup>

It can be argued that the increase in material prosperity of the working classes was also a factor in the abandonment by the middle class writers and artists of the supposed moral responsibilities of their class. For instance, part of Wilde's support of aestheticism in wearing decorative and exotic clothes was that he was aiming not just to impress "the world of theatre and press," but through them, "the larger paying public."<sup>27</sup>

Decadence in France was also the product of radical change in the social system with the establishment of the New Republic. The Decadent Movement in

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25. Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: The Viking Press, 1990), p. 4. For the summery of the general cultural and political phenomena, see her "Introduction."

26. Alison Hennegan, "Personalities and Principles: Aspects of Literature and Life in England," in *Fin-de Siècle and Its Legacy*, ed. Mikulas Teich and Roy Porter, 1990, p. 197.

27. Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), pp. 295-296.

France is "a style evolved by elite (writers) under threat for addressing the tensions and contradictions of that period."<sup>28</sup> We can say that the European Decadent writers appeared in a time of social uncertainty with the promise of change.

#### IV. The Dilemma of "Modern *Shih*"

Having analysed some of the forms that decadence took in both Chinese classical literature, and in the writing of modern European and Chinese authors, we are now in a position to discuss Chu T'ien-wen's works in the historical context of decadence as a Chinese cultural phenomenon.

Chu T'ien-wen as a "modern *shih*" is apprehensive of the changes taking place in the moral climate and power structure of Taiwan. Her distress at a change of regime is accentuated by the fact that in Taiwan, a dynastic type of authority is being progressively replaced by a democratic form of government. To the modern day *shih* as to the classic *shih*, the idea that the common people should gain any form of power or authority (without being led by *shih*) is extremely worrying and a sign of a coming deterioration in the moral standards of society.

The contrast between the Wei-Chin and the late Ming *shih*, and Chu T'ien-wen lies in the fact that the earlier *shih* were reacting against the perceived oppression of the rulers within the dynastic system, whereas Chu's latest work is a reaction against the process of democratisation and the prospective disappearance of the neo-dynastic system inaugurated by Chiang Kai-shek.

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<sup>28</sup>. Jennifer Birkett, *The Sins of the Fathers: Decadence in France 1870-1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1986), p. 3



During the process of democratisation, Taiwan writers face the difficult problem of whether to portray Taiwan society as a continuation of Chinese culture outside the Mainland, or as the legacy of fifty years of Japanese acculturalisation, or as an independent Taiwanese cultural entity, when all three of these characterisations not only co-exist, but are being brought into question by a heated debate on whether they will continue to have validity amid the fast pace of change in the 1990s.

Cultural change in Taiwan during the past twenty years has been influenced by international attitudes towards democracy. We see the identity of Taiwan no longer being firmly restricted by the party/state's cultural controls, no longer conveniently nestled in the negative time warp of return-to the-mainland Nationalist ideology, and seeming to be taking a consistent, if fitful course towards Western style democracy, as an educated, affluent, increasingly cosmopolitan populace actively seeks a new role for Taiwan. Much of the discussion, as Thomas B. Gold points out, is about the form that the "civil society" will take,<sup>29</sup> a matter not only of political, social, cultural, and recreational interest groups, but also of cultural debate, seeking to establish a new identity.

However, what is clear is that a democratic trend tends to empower the ordinary people. The formation of a people-oriented "civil society" inevitably means a decay of the old structure, in which the ruling elite's position is doomed to be devalued. It is for these reasons that Chu's writing expresses her desolation in the face of the progress of democracy: "A commoner (I) personally witness daily the completion of the construction by the Li clan of centralised political, business and economic systems here. Consequently, within the last few years, the discrepancy between (the living standards of) the rich and the

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<sup>29</sup>. Stevan Harrell and Huang Chün-chieh, ed., *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan* (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1994), p. 21.

poor has become worse. To enforce his authority, (Li) unilaterally alters the constitution, making the scholars of law and politics 'open their eyes and hold their tongues' in amazement. However, the largest opposition party, due to all kinds of complexes and myths, abandon their power and have no method of exercising their responsibility to supervise (the government), leading to the perpetration of hundreds of thousands of absurd farces. As an ordinary citizen, what else can I do except close the door and write (my) novel?"<sup>30</sup>

She has put all her passion into her fiction as a sublimation of her fears for the future with only a small possibility of hope:

In my life, sensitivity, sentiment, erudition, inner reflection are all expressions of sensuality, like a camera which captures the details and keeps the picture on file. They are memories and experiences, which will die out when I die. It is only from creative writing, as I delve into a vast, unclear consciousness, crawl into, ponder on it, and indulge it, that there is the greatest satisfaction. Looking ahead, misery can be foreseen, creative writing is the only hope.<sup>31</sup>

Writing is Chu's way of coping with what she regards as a society in moral danger. In *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, she is able to use the dilemma of her protagonist in finding his place in the social structure; both to set out her *shih* beliefs, and to acknowledge frankly that Taiwan's elite-maintained old social order is no longer feasible.

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<sup>30</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, *HJSC*, p. 237.

<sup>31</sup>. Chu T'ien-wen, "Tzu-wen" (Self-enquiry), *Unitas*, no. 95 (September, 1992):

Chu stresses that she needs "a strict sense of order."<sup>32</sup> In other words, even if the aim to re-build the old civilisation (or nation) is impossible to achieve, a blueprint for the future is needed to enable hope to be sustained. It is the impossibility of resolution of the protagonist's problem, and its immediate relevance to Chu's own situation which, through Chu's depiction of the predicament of gay love, gives the novel its very personal resonance, and immediate, tangible sensuality.

In the more limited perspective of the Wei-Chin period, the decadent life style was described in terms of indulgence in basic pleasures by a small group of people. Chu's *The Notebook of the Desolate Man* not only deploys this feature but also takes in more sophisticated modern pleasures, and describes the sensual intoxication of the young and the old, of men and women, of heterosexuals and homosexuals. Because she deals with the isolation and artificiality in the modern city, she has been able to give a wide ranging and detailed picture of the loneliness of the individual that is unequalled by any other Chinese writer. Her protagonists, although they enjoy their erotic sexual pleasures, also suffer severe alienation from society.

As Chu's writing progresses from her idealistic early works, via Nativism-influenced film stories, to "aesthetic" fiction and "decadent" novel, her own personal belief follows a similar trajectory. Like most of her mainlander protagonists in her recent works who have moved away from their sinocentric mentality, Chu T'ien-wen has largely given up on Three-Three Society's efforts and adopted, albeit reluctantly, a "decadent" outlook. Her decadence, however, is a *shih's* decadence, and is distinctive in that it is mostly reflected in a state of mind (and in writing) but not translated into characteristically debauched

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32. Huang Chin-shu, "Shen-chi chih-wu: hou si-shih-si hui? (hou) hsian-tai ch'i-shih-lu?", in Chu T'ien-wen, *HYCS*, p. 282.

practices. She can never really abandon her early ideals completely, thus her brand of decadence carries a traditionalist flavour. For instance, in writing *The Notebook of a Desolate Man*, Chu appears to be trying to resolve problems caused by the great social changes around her and attempting to come to terms with the decline she sees in society and in herself.

With deep insight into this paradox of the modern city, Chu provides a new perspective on contemporary Taiwan culture which gives the possibility of greater understanding of both its psychological and its ethical complexities. Her *shih* persona gives her the moral and aesthetic resources to go deeper than the superficiality of the Chinese decadent literature of the 1930s, let alone the limited social view of Chang Ai-ling's writing. Chang Ai-ling is already regarded by critics as one of the best stylists in modern Chinese literary history. Even though we have to await the judgement of posterity for a comparative evaluation of these two women writers, there is no doubt that Chu's decadent writing makes a more profound comment on society than does the writing of Chang Ai-ling.

Moreover, for Chu ethical questions are fundamental both to her approach to literature and to the conservation of harmony in society. It was precisely the impact of cultural change in Taiwan which forced her to re-examine her own identity, and led to her contributing to the literature of Taiwan, works of powerful imaginative vitality and humanitarian pathos.

## Glossary

### I. Chinese Character List

#### A

A-jung 阿榮

A-ch'ing 阿清

A-yao 阿堯

A-Yen 阿言

An-an 安安

"An-an te chia-ch'i" (Summer at Grandpa's) 安安的假期

"An tzu hsi jen pi hua ti" (I Myself Happily Enjoy Being Lower Than the  
Flower) 俺自喜人比花低

#### C

"Ch'ai shih-fu" (Master Ch'ai) 柴師父

Chang Ai-ling 張愛玲

Ch'ang-chiang 長江

Chang Chü-cheng 張居正

Chang K'e-piao 章克標

Chang Shu-hua 張淑華

Che-chiang 浙江

Ch'en Ch'eng 陳誠

"Ch'en-hsiang hsieh: ti-yi lu hsiang" (Agalloch Eaglewood Bits: The First  
Stove of Incense) 沈香屑：第一爐香

Ch'en K'un-hou 陳坤厚  
 Ch'en-mo te tao-yü (*Silent Island*) 沉默的島嶼  
 Ch'i-chin 旗津  
 ch'i-jia chih-kuo p'ing-t'ien-hsia 齊家治國平天下  
 Chi K'ang 嵇康  
 Ch'i-kung 氣功  
 Chi-mo chih-hsiang (*The Land of Loneliness*) 寂寞之鄉  
 chi-t'ung (dancing man) 乩童  
 "Chia, shih yung kao-chih hu ch'i lai te" (*A House Glued Together from Writing Paper*) 家，是用稿紙糊起來的  
 Chia Pa 賈霸  
 Chia-pao 嘉寶  
 Chia-wei 佳瑋  
 Chiang chün ling (*By Command of the General*) 將軍令  
 Chiang-chün yü wo (*The General and I*) 將軍與我  
 Chiang-ho 江河  
 Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石  
 "Ch'iang shuo te ch'ou" (*Feigned Sorrow*) 強說的愁  
 Ch'iao-ai 僑愛  
 Ch'iao ju ts'ai-tie fei fei fei (*Cute as the Flying Butterfly*)  
 俏如彩蝶飛飛飛  
 Ch'iao t'ai-shou hsin-chi (*The Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao*)  
 喬太守新記  
 Ch'iao t'ai-shou luan-tien yüan-yang p'u (*Magistrate Ch'iao Muddles Matchmaking*) 喬太守亂點鴛鴦譜  
 Ch'ien-ts'ao (*Sprouts*) 淺草  
 Chieh 傑

Chieh-ming 潔明  
 Chin-ho (A-ho) 錦和 (阿和)  
 Chin-ling shen hsüeh-yüan 金陵神學院  
 Chin-p'ing mei (The Golden Lotus) 金瓶梅  
 Chin-sheng chin-shih (This Life and This World) 今生今世  
 "Ch'ing-ch'eng chih-lien" (Love in a Fallen City) 傾城之戀  
 "Ch'ing-ch'ing tzu-chin" (Young Scholars) 青青子衿  
 ching-chü (Chinese opera) 京劇  
 ch'ing-t'an (pure talk) 清談  
 Ch'ing-tao 青島  
 ch'ing-yi (honest advocates) 清議  
 Ch'ing-wang 清旺  
 Ch'ing-wen 晴雯  
 chih-shih fen-tzu 知識份子  
 Ch'ih-ti chih-lien (Naked Earth) 赤地之戀  
 "Chih-tzu yü-kui" (Wedding) 之子于歸  
 chih-yeh tso-chia 職業作家  
 Ch'iu-lien (Autumn Lotus) 秋蓮  
 chiu-shih 救世  
 Ch'iung Yao 瓊瑤  
 Chou-chou 洲洲  
 "Chu-ch'i yi-jih" (A Day in Chu-chi) 竹崎一日  
 Chu Ch'ing-hai 朱青海  
 Chu-lin ch'i-hsien 竹林七賢  
 Chu Hsi-ning 朱西甯  
 Chu Hsiang 朱湘  
 chü-pen 劇本

Chu T'ien-hsin 朱天心

*Chu T'ien-wen tien-ying hsiao-shuo chi* (The Film Stories of Chu T'ien-wen)

朱天文電影小說集

Chu T'ien-yi 朱天衣

*Ch'u T'zu* 楚辭

Ch'ü Yüan 屈原

*Ch'uan-ch'i* (Romances) 傳奇

*Ch'uan-shuo* (Legend) 傳說

chüan-ts'un 眷村

Ch'uang-tsao (*Creation*) 創造

Chungshan 中山

Chungshan nü-kao 中山女高

"Ch'un-feng ch'ui yu sheng" (Spring Breezes Bring Renewal) 春風吹又生

Chung-hua jih-pao 中華日報

Chung-kuo nü-jen (Chinese Women) 中國女人

Chung-kuo wen-yi hsieh-hui 中國文藝協會

Chung Ling 鍾玲

Chung-yang jih-pao 中央日報

## E

Erh-hu 二胡

"Erh-tzu te ta wan-ou" (His Son's Big Doll) 兒子的大玩偶

## F

Fan-kung-ta-lu 反攻大陸



Fan-fan 凡凡  
 Fan Li-hua 樊梨花  
 fang-chih-niang lü (long horned grass-hopper green) 紡織娘綠  
 Fei Tuo 費多  
 "Fengkuei lai te jen" (The Boys from Fengkuei) 風櫃來的人  
 Fu, pi, hsing 賦，比，興  
 "Fu-sang yi-chih" (A Hibiscus Flower) 扶桑一枝

## H

*Han-shu yi-wen chih* 漢書藝文志  
 Han wu-ti 漢武帝  
 Hang-chou 杭州  
 Hang-hsiang se-ch'ing wu-t'o-pang (Sailing to the Erotic Utopia)  
 航向色情烏托邦  
*Hao-nan hou-nü* (Good Men, Good Women) 好男好女  
*Hao-t'ien-ch'i kei shei t'i-ming* (For Whom is the Good Weather Named)  
 好天氣給誰題名  
 Ho Hsiu-li 何修禮  
 Ho Yü-wen 何郁雯  
 Hou Hsiao-hsien 侯孝賢  
*Hsi-meng jen-sheng* (The Puppet Master) 戲夢人生  
 Hsia Chieh 夏榮  
 "Hsiang-tso" (I would like to become. . . ) 想做  
 Hsiang-t'u wen-hsüeh 鄉土文學  
*Hsiao-ch'eng ku-shih* (Story of Small City) 小城故事  
 Hsiao-hsing 小杏

Hsiao-ni 小霓  
 "Hsiao-Pi te ku-shih" (Story of Hsiao-Pi) 小畢的故事  
 Hsiao-Shao 小韶  
 hsiao-shuo chia 小說家  
 Hsiao-shuo chia-tsu (A Family of Novelists) 小說家族  
 Hsieh Ts'ai-chün 謝材俊  
 "Hsieh tsai ch'un-t'ien" (Writing in the Spring) 寫在春天  
 Hsien Chih 仙枝  
 Hsien-tai chu-yi (Modernism) 現代主義  
 "Hsien-yüan ju hua" (Immortal Fate like Flower) 仙緣如花  
 Hsin-kan-chüeh p'ai 新感覺派  
 Hsin Tang (New Party) 新黨  
 Hsin-yüeh p'ai (Crescent Moon School) 新月派  
 Hsing-tao t'ien-ya (The Way of the World) 行道天涯  
 Hsü Chih-mo 徐志摩  
 Hsü Hsü 徐訐  
 Hsüan Hsiao-fo 玄小佛  
 Hu Lan-ch'eng 胡蘭成  
 "Hu-tieh chi" (Recollections of a Butterfly) 蝴蝶記  
 "Hua-kang te yeh" (The Night in Hua-Kang) 華崗的夜  
 "Hua wen" (The Flower Asks) 花問  
 Hua-yi ch'ien-shen (A Flower Remembers Her Previous Lives) 花憶前身  
 "Huai-sha" (Embracing the Sand) 懷沙  
 huan 歡  
 huang-chin chieh-kou (golden structure) 黃金結構  
 Huang Ch'un-ming 黃春明  
 Huang-ho 黃河

*Huang-jen shou-chi* (The Notebook of a Desolate Man) 荒人手記  
 "Huang-ju tso-jih" (Seeming Like Yesterday) 恍如昨日  
*Huang-kuan* (The Crown) 皇冠  
 "Huang-Lao p'ien" 黃老篇  
*Huang-pu* 黃埔  
*Huang ti* 黃帝  
 "Hung-mei kui hu-chiao ni" (Red Rose Is Paging You) 紅玫瑰呼叫你  
 "Hung mei-kui yü pai mei-kui" (Red Rose and White Rose)  
 紅玫瑰與白玫瑰  
*Hung-yi fa-shih* (Li Shu-t'ung) 弘一法師 (李叔同)  
*Huo-ch'e ch'eng che t'ien-ya lai* (The Train Coming from the Distant Sky)  
 火車乘著天涯來

## J

"Jeng-jan tsai yin-ch'in shan-yao che" (Still Shining Diligently)  
 仍然在殷勤閃耀著  
*Jih-kuang nan-hai* (The Boy of the Sun) 日光男孩  
*Jih-shen te hou-yi* (The Descendant of the Sun Goddess) 日神的後裔  
 "Jou-shen p'u-sa" (Carnal Bodhisattva) 肉身菩薩  
*Juan Chi* 阮籍

## K

"K'an Chiang-shan mei-jen" (Seeing the film *A Beautiful Woman and the Landscape*) 看江山美人  
*Kao-shou-tzu* 高瘦子

Kaohsiung 高雄  
 Kao ying-wu 高鸚鵡  
 Keelung 基隆  
 ke-wu chih-chih 格物致知  
 K'e Yi-cheng 柯一正  
 Kinmen (Quemoy) 金門  
 Ku Hsien-ch'eng 顧憲成  
 kua-jang hung (melon pulp red) 瓜瓢紅  
 kuan-hua 官話  
*Kuang-yin te ku-shih* (In Our Time) 光陰的故事  
 kung 工  
 "Kung-ch'ang jen" (Factory People) 工廠人  
 kung-fu 功夫  
 kung-hua chi-mo hung (lonely palace flower red) 宮花寂寞紅  
*K'ung-pu fen-tzu* 恐怖份子  
 Kunming 昆明  
 "Kuo-feng" 國風  
 kuo-tsu shen-hua 國族神話  
 Kuo Tzu 郭子

## L

"La-mei san-nung" (Winter Plum with Three Variations) 臘梅三弄  
 Lai Ch'eng-ying 賴成英  
*Lang* (Wolf) 狼  
 Lao K Chia 老K家  
 lao-pai-hsing 老百姓

Lao-Tuan      老段  
 Li Ch'ang-hsien      李昌憲  
 Li Hsing      李行  
 "Li-jen hsing" (A Loving Couple)      儷人行  
 Li Man-kui      李曼瑰  
 Li P'ing      李平  
 Li Shuang-tse      李雙澤  
 "Li-yüan su-jen" (Artist of the Peking Opera)      梨園素人  
 li-yüeh cheng-chih      禮樂政治  
 Li-yüeh wen-ming      禮樂文明  
 Liang Ch'i-ch'ao      梁啟超  
 Lien-he fu-k'an      聯合副刊  
*Lien-lien feng-ch'en* (Dust in the Wind)      戀戀風塵  
 Lin Tai-yü      林黛玉  
 Lin Tuan      林端  
 "Ling-lung t'a lai t'a ling-lung" (Exquisite Pagoda)      玲瓏塔來塔玲瓏  
 Liu Hui-mei      劉惠美  
 "*Liu-li wa*" (Glass Tile)      琉璃瓦  
 Liu Ling      劉伶  
 Liu Na-ou      劉訥鷗  
*Liu-yen* (Words Written on the Water)      流言  
 Lu Fei-yi      盧非易  
 Lu Hsün      魯迅

## M

Ma Shu-li      馬叔禮

man-hua 漫畫  
 Mei-hsi 妹喜  
 Mei-li-tao shih-chien 美麗島事件  
 Mei-yi 梅儀  
 Meng-ch'en 蒙塵  
 Mi-luo 汨羅  
 Mi-ya 米亞  
 Mi-sa 彌洒  
 Miao-li 苗栗  
 min (people) 民  
 min-kuo nü-tzu 民國女子  
 min-chien ch'i-ping 民間起兵  
 Min-chin-tang 民進黨  
 min-chu cheng-chih 民主政治  
 min-pen cheng-chih 民本政治  
 "Mo shang hua" (Flowers on the Path) 陌上花  
 "Mou-nien mou-yüeh te mou-yi-t'ien" (That Year, That Month and That Day)  
     某年某月的某一天  
 mu-ch'ai-yü 木柴魚  
 Mu Shih-ying 穆時英  
 "Mu-yang-ch'iao tsai-chien" (Farewell, Shepherd Bridge) 牧羊橋再見

## N

Neihu 內湖  
 "Ni-luo ho nü-erh" (Daughter of the Nile) 尼羅河女兒  
 Nieh-tzu (Sinful Son) 孽子

"Nien-ch'ing te shih-hou" (The Time of Youth) 年輕的時候

"Nü chih su" (Rebirth of the Woman) 女之甦

nü-huo (women disaster) 女禍

Nü Wa 女媧

nung (peasants) 農

## P

*Pa-ch'ung ying* 八重櫻

pa-ku-wen 八股文

Pa erh san p'ao-chan (The Battle of August the Twenty-Third)

八二三炮戰

pai-hua 白話

Pai Hsien-yung 白先勇

Pai Liu-su 白流蘇

Pan Ku 班固

pei-chuang 悲壯

Pei-ch'ing ch'eng-shih (City of Sadness) 悲情城市

*Pen-hsiang tai-yang* (Head for the Sun) 奔向太陽

Penghu 澎湖

Pi-chüan 碧娟

P'ing Lu 平路

p'ing-min, shih-min, kung-min, kuo-min 平民，市民，公民，國民

pu-tai-hsi 布袋戲

"Pu-yi" (Wonder) 卜疑

# S

- San chieh-mei* (Three Sisters) 三姊妹
- San Mao 三毛
- San-min chu-yi 三民主義
- San-san chi-k'an 三三集刊
- San-san she 三三社
- San-san shu-fang 三三書坊
- san-ti 三體
- se 色
- Si-shu chi-chu* 四書集注
- Shan-ho sui-yüeh* (Landscape and Time) 山河歲月
- "Shan-hua hung" (Mountain Red Flower) 山花紅
- shan-lei* (good people) 善類
- shang 商
- Shang-nü pu chih wang-kuo hen 商女不知亡國恨
- Shao Hsün-mei 邵洵美
- Shen Ts'ung-wen 沈從文
- shih 士
- Shih 施
- Shih Che-ts'un 施鰲存
- "Shih-chi-mo te hua-li" (Splendour of the End of the Century)  
世紀末的華麗
- shih-chieh ta-t'ung 世界大同
- Shih-ching* 詩經
- Shih-hou she 獅吼社
- "Shih-meng" (Dream of the World) 世夢



*shih tang* (shih party) 士黨

"Ssu-hsiang ch'i" (Recall) 思想起

Ssu-ma clan 司馬氏

"Su-tu Pa-erh-san chu" (Reading on *The Battle of August Twenty-Third*)

素讀八二三注

Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙

## T

*Ta huo-chü te ai* (The Love of the Flaming Torch) 大火炬的愛

"Ta tzu-jan wu ta chi-pen fa-tse" (The Five Basic Principles of Nature)

大自然五大基本法則

"Tai wo ch'ü pa yüeh-kuang" (Take Me With You, Moonlight)

帶我去吧，月光

*Tamkang chi* (Notes on Tamkang) 淡江記

"T'an Ch'ih-ti chih lien" (On *Naked Earth*) 談赤地之戀

Tan-shui 淡水

tang-wai (outside party) 堂外

Tao Ch'ien 陶潛

"Tao-hua tan-shui shen ch'ien-chih" (Peach Pond Water Thousand-Foot Deep)

桃花潭水深千尺

Tao-hua yüan chi 桃花源記

"Tao-shu jen chia you-shih" (The Family under the Peach Tree)

桃樹人家有事

Tao Ter-chen 陶德辰

Tao Yao 桃夭

T'eng Ku 滕固

"Ti-teng jen" (Low Class People) 低等人

t'ien-jen ho-yi 天人合一

t'ien, ti, jen 天、地、人

T'ieh-chiang (Molten Iron) 鐵漿

Ting Ya-min 丁亞民

Ts'ai na ho-p'an ch'ing-ts'ao ch'ing (The Green, Green Grass)

在那河畔青草青

"Ts'ai-wei, ts'ai-feng" (Benefice Flower and Wind) 采薇，采風

ts'ang-liang 蒼涼

Tsao-an, Taipei (Good Morning, Taipei) 早安，台北

"Tsen-yi-ke ch'ou-tzu liao-te" (Sorrow Beyond Words) 怎一個愁字了得

"Tzu yeh ke" (Midnight Song) 子夜歌

Tsui hsiang-nien te chi-chieh (The Most Memorable Season)

最想念的季節

"Ch'un-shan-hsing" (Walk with Spring Clothes; Lit. The Journey of the Youth)

春衫行

tu-shu-jen 讀書人

"t'ui-fei" 頹廢

t'ui-lü 頹緣

t'ung-hua 童話

Tung-lin shu-yüan 東林書院

"Tung-lin tang" 東林堂

"T'ung-nien wang-shih" (A Time to Live and A Time to Die) 童年往事

## W

Wang Chao-chün 王昭君

Wang Chen-ho 王禎和

Wang Chin-p'ing 王津平

Wang Ching-wei 汪精衛

wang-kuo 亡國

wang-t'ien-hsia 亡天下

*Wang-yang chung te yi-t'iao ch'uan* (A Single Boat in the Stormy Sea)

汪洋中的一條船

Wei-Chin 魏晉

Wei Chung-hsien 魏忠賢

Wei-mei p'ai 唯美派

Weihaiwei 威海衛

*Wen-hsin tiao-lung* (The Heart of Literature and Carved Dragon)

文心雕龍

wen-ming 文明

wen-she 文社

"Wo-ke yüeh p'ai-huai" (A Song in the Moonlight) 我歌月徘徊

"Wo meng hai-t'ang" (I Dream About China) 我夢海棠

"Wo-men te An-an" (Our An-an) 我們的安安

wu-ming 無明

Wu Nien-chen 吳念真

"Wu-t'i" (Unnamed Title) 無題

"Wu-yüeh ch'ing" (A Sunny May) 五月晴

## Y

Yang Ch'ing-ch'u 楊青矗

Yang Chao 楊照

*Yang-ke* (The Rice-Sprout Song) 秧歌  
*Yang-shen lun* (On Regimen) 養身論  
*Yang Te-ch'ang* 楊德昌  
*Yang Tsu-chün* 楊祖璿  
*Yao Yi-wei* 姚一葦  
 "Yeh-chin-che" (The Men Who Smelt Gold) 冶金者  
 "Yeh-tzu chieh-tsai tsung-lü shang" (The Coconut Is Bound to the Palm)  
     椰子結在棕櫚上  
*Yen-hsia chih-tu* (City of Summer Heat) 炎夏之都  
 "Yi-pei k'an chien-ch'i" (One Cup Sees the Spirit of the Sword)  
     一杯看劍氣  
 "Yi-tien pu-tsai" (No More Garden of Eden) 伊甸不在  
*yin/yang* 陰陽  
*ying-hsiung mei-jen* 英雄美人  
 "Yüan" (Fate) 緣  
*Yüan Si* 袁廡  
*Yüan-hsiang jen* (Home Town People) 原鄉人  
*Yüan-yang hu-tieh p'ai* 鴛鴦蝴蝶派  
*Yüeh-fu* 樂府  
*Yung-chieh* 永桔

## II. Translation of Titles

### A

"Agalloch Eaglewood Bits: The First Sove of Incense" (Ch'en-hsiang hsieh:  
ti-yi lu hsiang)

"Artist of the Peking Opera" (Li-yüan su-jen)

*Autumn Lotus* (Ch'iu-lien)

### B

"Benefice Flower and Wind" (Ts'ai-wei, tsai-feng)

*The Boy of the Sun* (Jih-kuang nan-hai)

"The Boys from Fengkuei" (Fengkuei lai te jen)

*By Command of the General* (Chiang-chün-ling)

### C

"Carnal Bodhisattva" (Jou-shen p'u-sa)

*City of Sadness* (Pei-ch'ing ch'eng-shih)

*City of Summer Heat* (Yen-hsia chih-tu)

"The Coconut Is Bound to the Palm Tree" (Yeh-tzu chieh-tsai tsung-lü shang)

### D

"Daughter of the Nile" (Ni-luo ho nü-erh)

"A Day in Chu-chi" (Chu-ch'i yi-jih)

*The Descendant of the Sun Goddess* (Jih-shen te hou-yi )

"Dream of the World" (Shih-meng)

*Dust in the Wind* (Lien-lien feng ch'en)

## E

"Embracing the Sand" (Huai-sha)

"Exquisite Pagoda" (Ling-lung t'a lai t'a ling-lung)

## F

*A Family of Novelists* (Hsiao-shuo chia-tsu)

"The Family under the Peach Tree" (Tao-shu jen-chia you-shih)

"Farewell, Shepherd Bridge" (Mu-yang-ch'iao tsai-chien)

"Fate" (Yüan)

"Feigned Sorrow" (Ch'iang shuo te ch'ou)

*The Film Stories of Chu T'ien-wen* (Chu T'ien-wen tien-ying hsiao-shuo-chi)

"The Flower Asks" (Hua wen)

"Flowers on the Path" (Mo shang hua)

*A Flower Remembers Her Previous Lives* (Hua-yi ch'ian-shen)

*For Whom is the Good Weather Named* (Hou-t'ien-ch'i kei shei ti-ming)

## G

"Glass Tile" (Liu-li wa)

*The Golden Lotus* (Chin-p'ing mei)

*Good Men, Good Women* (Hao-nan hou-nü)

*Good Morning, Taipei* (Tsao-an, Taipei)

## H

*Head for the Sun* (Pen-hsiang t'ai-yang)

"His Son's Big Doll" (Erh-tzu te ta wan-ou)

"A Hibiscus Flower" (Fu-sang yi-chih)

"A House Glued Together from Writing Paper" (Chia, shih yung kao-chih hu ch'i  
lai te)

*Home Town People* (Yüan-hsiang jen)

## I

"I Dream About China" (Wo meng hai-t'ang)

"Immortal Fate like Flower" (Hsien-yüan ju hua)

*In Our Time* (Kuang-yin te ku-shih)

"I Myself Happily Enjoy Being Lower Than the Flower" (An tzu hsi jen pi hua  
ti)

"I Would Like to Become. . ." (Hsiang-tso)

## L

*Legend* (Ch'uan-shuo)

"Love in a Fallen City" (Ch'ing-ch'eng chih-lien)

"A Loving couple" (Li-jen hsing)

*The Love of the Flaming Torch* (Ta huo-chü te ai)

"Low Class People" (Ti-teng jen)

## M

"Master Ch'ai" (Ch'ai shih-fu)

"The Men Who Smelt Gold" (Yeh-chin-che)

"Midnight Song" (Tzu yeh ke)

*The Modern Stories of Magistrate Ch'iao* (Ch'iao t'ai-shou hsin-chi)

*The Most Memorable Season* (Tsui hsiang-nien te chi-chieh)

"Mountain Red Flower" (Shan-hua hung)

## N

"The Night in Hua-Kang" (Hua-kang te yeh)

"No More Garden of Eden" (Yi-tien pu-tsai)

*The Notebook of a Desolate Man* (Huang-jen shou-chi)

*Notes on Tamkang* (Tamkang chi)

## O

"On Naked Earth" (T'an Ch'ih-ti chih-lien)

"One Cup Sees the Spirit of the Sword" (Yi-pei k'an chien-ch'i)

"Our An-an" (Wo-men te An-an)

## P

"Peach Pond Water Thousand-Foot Deep" (Tao-hua tan-shui shen ch'ien-chih)

*The Puppet Master* (Hsi-meng jen-sheng)



## R

"Rebirth of the Woman" (Nü chih su)

"Recall" (Ssu-hsiang ch'i)

"Recollections of a Butterfly" (Hu-tieh chi)

"Red Rose Is Paging You" (Hung-mei kui hu-chiao ni)

"Red Rose and White Rose" (Hung mei-kui yü pai mei-kui)

"Reading on *The Battle of August Twenty-Third*" (Su-tu Pa-erh-san chu)

*Romance* (Ch'uan-ch'i)

## S

"Section on Huang-ti and Lao Tzu" (Huang-Lao p'ien)

"Seeing the film *A Beautiful Woman and the Landscape*" (K'an Ch'iang-shan  
mei-jen)

"Seeming Like Yesterday" (Huang-ju tso-jih)

*Sinful Son* (Nieh-tzu)

*A Single Boat in the Stormy Sea* (Wang-yang chung te yi-t'iao ch'uan)

*Silent Island* (Ch'en-mo te tao-yü)

"A Song in the Moonlight" (Wo-ke yüeh p'ai-huai)

"Sorrow Beyond Words" (Tsen-yi-ke ch'ou-tzu liao-te)

*Splendour of the End of the Century* (Shih-chi-mo te hua-li)

"Spring Breezes Bring Renewal" (Ch'un-feng ch'ui you sheng)

"Still Shining Diligently" (Jeng-jan tsai yin-chin shan-yao che)

*Story of Hsiao-Pi* (Hsiao-Pi te ku-shih)

*Story of Small City* (Hsiao-ch'eng ku-shih)

"Summer at Grandpa's" (An-an te chia-ch'i)

"A Sunny May" (Wu-yüeh ch'ing)

## T

"Take Me With You, Moonlight" (Tai wo ch'ü pa yüeh-kuang)

"That Year, That Month and That Day" (Mou-nien mou-yüeh te mou-yi-t'ien)

*This Life and This World* (Chin-sheng chih-shih)

*Three Sisters* (San chieh-mei)

"The Time of Youth" (Nien-ch'ing te shih-hou)

"A Time to Live, A Time to Die" (T'ung-nien wang-shih)

## U

"Unnamed Title" (Wu-t'i)

## W

"Walk with Spring Clothes; Lit. The Journey of the Youth" (Ts'un-shan- hsing)

*The Way of the World* (Hsing-tao t'ien-ya)

"Wedding" (Chih-tzu yü-kui)

"Winter Plum with Three Variations "(La-mei san-nung)

*Wolf* (Lang)

"Writing in the Spring" (Hsieh tsai ch'un-t'ien)

## Y

"Young Scholars" (Ch'ing-ch'ing tzu-chin)

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